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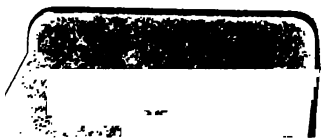
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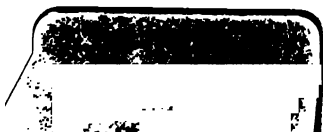
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THE BURGOMASTER'S WIFE



THE
BURGOMASTER'S WIFE

A Tale of the Siege of Leyden

BY
GEORG EBERS
AUTHOR OF "THE EGYPTIAN PRINCESS," ETC.

TRANSLATED BY CLARA BELL



London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1882

251. k. 113.

Printed by R. & R. CLARK, Edinburgh.

Dedication.

TO THE

BARONESS SOPHIE VON BRANDENSTEIN

(*née* EBERS).

No words are needed to tell you, the only sister of my father, why I should dedicate this book to you. From my earliest years you have been my loving and faithful friend; nor can you have forgotten how, seventeen years since, I, as your guest, was busy in arranging the materials on which I have founded this tale. You then made note for me of many things which had struck me as strange, remarkable, or amusing, and when the calls of duty hindered my carrying on my favourite studies of the history of Holland,—my mother's native land,—you were indefatigable in pointing out to me such unused material as had attracted your attention and interest.

Now, at length, I am enabled to do justice to the subject I had so long laid aside. A noble fragment of the history of Holland is the prop round which the fanciful wreaths of my story cling. You have watched it grow, and will accept it with kindness and indulgence.

With sincere regard and affection,

Ever yours,

GEORG EBERS.



THE BURGOMASTER'S WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

IN the year of our Lord 1574 an early spring smiled brightly on the Netherlands. The sky was blue, gnats danced in the sunshine, white butterflies clung fluttering to the newly-opened golden flower-cups, and on the margin of one of the canals which intersected the wide plain stood a stork, snapping at a fine fat frog; in a moment the luckless prey was wriggling in his enemy's red beak. One jerk, and the living victim had vanished, and his murderer spread his wings and soared aloft. The bird flew off and away—over pleasaunces and garden plots full of blossoming fruit-trees, neatly-edged flower-beds, and many-tinted arbours; over the sinister ring of walls and forts that enclosed the town; over the narrow houses with their high-peaked gables; over well-kept roads, bordered with elms, poplars, limes, and willows, all in their fresh dress of vernal green. At last he settled on a tiled roof, where his nest was snugly ensconced on the ridge, and after generously disgorging his prey for his sitting mate, he perched on one leg, and stood meditatively looking down on the town that lay below him, bright and smart in brilliant red brick on the velvet carpet

B

of meadow-land. He had known this beautiful Leyden, the pride of Holland, for many a year. He was familiar with every arm and runlet of the Rhine, which divided the handsome town into innumerable islets, and were spanned by as many bridges as there are days in five months of the year; though, indeed, since his last journey southwards much had been changed.

What had become of the citizens' gay summer-houses and orchards? Where were the wooden frames on which the women had been wont to tenter their dark or gaily-coloured homespun cloth? Every structure made by the hand of man, every natural growth which had ever stood even breast-high to break the uniform level of the plain outside the ramparts and forts, had vanished from the face of the earth; and further away, near the bird's favourite hunting-ground, there were to be seen on the green meadow-land brown patches sprinkled over with black rings.

In the end of October of the previous year, not long after the storks had flitted from the country, a Spanish army had pitched its camp here; and it was only a few hours before the return of the feathered wanderers on the first day of spring, that the besiegers had withdrawn from their unsuccessful enterprise. Barren spots amid the luxuriant verdure marked their encampments, and the black patches were the ashes of their fires.

The citizens of the respited town, who had been reduced to great straits, were thankful to breathe freely again; and the industrious and easy-tempered people had soon forgotten the sufferings they had gone through; for the early spring-tide is sweet, and life snatched from death never seems so fair as when the delights of spring surround us.

A new and better time seemed to have begun, not for nature alone but for man. The soldiery who had garrisoned

the besieged city, and done many an evil deed meanwhile, had taken their departure two days since, with songs and much rejoicing. The carpenter's axe flashed in the spring sunshine outside the red brick walls and towers and gateways, cutting keenly into the logs which were to be made into new scaffolding-poles or tenter frames; thriving cattle pastured peacefully and fearlessly in the fields round the town; and in the gardens that had been laid waste men were busy digging, sowing, and planting. In the streets and in the houses a thousand pairs of hands were busy now, which but lately had wielded the arquebuse or spear in unprofitable toil; and old folks sat placidly at their doors, and warmed their marrow in the sun of a soft spring afternoon.

On this 18th of April there were but few discontented faces to be seen in Leyden. Of impatient ones there were plenty, no doubt, and any one who was seeking them had need only to go into the town school, where, as it was now near upon dinner-time, many a scholar looked more eagerly out of the open schoolroom windows than at the lips of his teacher.

The only portion of the large hall in which there was no disturbance was the end where the elder boys were in class. The April sunshine fell on their books and copies too, and the spring invited them too, into the sweet, fresh air; but what they were now hearing seemed to exercise a stronger spell on their young minds than even the spring's bewitching call.

Twenty pairs of bright eyes were eagerly fixed on the full-bearded man who was addressing the lads in a deep voice. Even the insubordinate Jan Mulder had dropped the knife with which he had begun to cut the life-like outline of a ham on his desk, and was listening attentively.

Presently the midday toll of the neighbouring church of St. Peter was heard, and immediately after, that of the tower of the Town Hall, and the smaller boys escaped noisily from the room; but—wonderful to tell—the patience of the elder scholars still held out; they must be listening to something which was not a part of their usual lessons.

In fact, the man who was standing in front of them was not one of the schoolmasters, but Van Hout, the Town-clerk, who, for this day, had taken the place of his friend Vertroot, the head-master and minister, who was too ill to attend. While the bell tolled he closed the book, and then went on to say: "*Suspendo lectionem*. You, Jan Mulder, how would you construe *suspendere*, as I used it?"

"To hang," said the boy.

"To hang!" laughed Van Hout,—“to hang you up to a hook perhaps, but what can you hang a lesson to?—Adrian van der Werff?”

The youth thus called upon promptly stood up and said: “‘*Suspendere lectionem*’ means to put an end to the lesson.”

“Good; and if I wanted to hang Jan Mulder, what should we say?”

“*Patibulare, ad patibulum!*” cried the boys in a chorus.

The Town-clerk's face, which a moment since had been smiling, was now very grave. He drew a deep breath, and then he said: “*Patibulo* is a vile Latin word; and your fathers, boys, when they sat here, understood its meaning less well than you do. Every child in the Netherlands understands it now, for Alva has stamped it on their souls. More than eighteen thousand worthy citizens have come to the gallows through his ‘*ad patibulum*.’”

And as he spoke, he pulled down his short black jerkin through his belt, stepped closer to the table in front of him, and, bending his robust person far over it, he said, in a voice which at each word betrayed greater agitation :

“That will do for to-day, boys. It will not perhaps matter much if you should by-and-by forget all the names you learn about here. But one thing keep ever in mind—our Fatherland above all things. Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans have not died in vain so long as there are men living who are capable of following their example. It will be your turn too some day. It is not my business to boast, but the truth will always be the truth. We Dutch have devoted fifteen times three hundred martyrs to the freedom of our native soil. In such stormy times great men are proved—even boys have not been found wanting. Ulrich there—the head boy—may be proud to bear his name of Löwing. ‘Persians against Greeks!’ it used to be said of old; ‘The Netherlands against Spain!’ is our cry. And the haughty Darius certainly never devastated Hellas as King Philip has devastated Holland. Yes, boys, many different kinds of flowers blossom in the heart of man; and among them is the venomous hemlock of hatred. Spain sowed it in our garden; I can feel it growing in my own heart, and you feel it, and ought to feel it. But do not misunderstand me: ‘Spain on one side and the Netherlands on the other!’ is the cry, and not ‘Here the Papists and there the Reformers!’ Every creed is acceptable in the sight of the Lord, if each man earnestly strives to walk in the footsteps of Christ. When we stand at the judgment-seat we shall not be asked, ‘Are you Papist, Calvinist, or Lutheran?’ but, ‘What has your mind been? What have your deeds been?’ Respect every man’s beliefs. But the man who makes common cause with the

oppressor against the freedom of our country—him you may scorn and loathe. Now, a minute of silent prayer, and then go home.”

The scholars rose to go ; Van Hout wiped the sweat from his brow, and while the lads were collecting their books, pencils, and pens, he went on, hesitatingly, as if trying to excuse himself to himself for what he was saying :

“What I have just been saying to you is not perhaps, strictly speaking, school work ; but, boys, this struggle is far from being at an end ; you will not long fill your places on these school benches, but you are fated to be our champions in the future. Löwing, wait a while ; I want to speak to you.”

The teacher slowly turned his back upon his class, and the boys rushed out of school.

In a corner under St. Peter's Church—just behind it, indeed, and disturbed by few passers-by—they all came to a stand-still, and the wild confusion of their talk resolved itself into a sort of council, to which the tones of the organ within the church formed a singular contrast. The question under discussion was what game they should arrange among themselves for their afternoon's amusement.

That it should be a sham fight was, after the Town-clerk's speech, sufficiently obvious ; it was not proposed by any one in set terms, but was the foregone conclusion on which their discussion was based. It was soon settled that not Greeks and Persians, but patriots and Spaniards, should enter the lists ; but when Adrian van der Werff, the Burgomaster's son, a lad of fourteen, proposed to select the two sides at once, and, with his usual despotic temper, to put Paul van Swieten and Klaus Dirkson on the side of the Spaniards, a violent dispute arose, and it soon appeared as a remarkable fact that no one would agree to play the part

of a foreign soldier. Every one wanted the others to be Castilians, and to fight himself under the Dutch flag. But friend and foe were alike indispensable to the battle, and the Dutch heroes needed Spaniards on whom to show their prowess. The youthful spirits waxed hot ; the cheeks of the disputants glowed angrily ; here and there a fist was doubled, and the symptoms seemed to indicate that the battle to be fought against an invading foe would turn into a furious civil war.

The sturdy lads, it is true, were little apt to play the parts of the gloomy, haughty soldiers of King Philip. Among the group of fair heads there were very few boys with brown hair, and only one with black hair and dark eyes. This was Adam Baersdorp, whose father, like Adrian van der Werff's, was one of the leaders of the municipality. When he too declined to be a Spaniard one of the others cried out :

"What ! you will not either ? And yet my father says that your father was half a 'Glipper,'¹ and altogether a Papist."

At these words young Baersdorp flung his books on the ground, and went close up to his antagonist, doubling his fist in his face, but Adrian van der Werff hastily interposed, exclaiming :

"For shame, Cornelius ! If I hear any one use such words here I'll stop his mouth. Catholics are as much Christians as we are ; you heard what the Town-clerk said, and my father says the same. Will you be a Spaniard or no, Adam ?"

"No," shouted the other ; "and if ever any one——"

¹ Glipper, for which the nearest English is perhaps *sneak*, was a nickname, derived from the Dutch verb *glippen*, to slide, and given, says Motley, to the Netherlanders belonging to King Philip's party.



"You can settle that afterwards," interrupted Adrian van der Werff, as he good-naturedly picked up the books his excited comrade had dropped, and gave them to him. Then he went on in decided tones, "Now, I am a Spaniard this time—who else?"

"I—I—and I if you like," cried several schoolboys; and the division of the two sides would have been brought to a satisfactory conclusion if the attention of the lads had not been diverted from their purpose by something new.

A young gentleman, followed by a negro servant, came up the street, and straight towards them. He too was Dutch, but there was little in common between him and the schoolboys excepting their age, a pink and white complexion, fair hair, and clear blue eyes that looked out on life with a haughty and defiant expression. Every step he took betrayed that he felt himself Somebody; and the negro in a gaudy dress who walked behind, carrying some objects he had just bought, aped his gestures in a very comical manner. The black boy's head was held even higher than his young master's, whose starched Spanish ruff prevented his turning his pretty head about as freely as other lads of his age.

"There is that ape, Wibisma," said one of the schoolboys, pointing with his finger to the young grandee. The eyes of the whole party were turned upon him, and took contemptuous measure of his little velvet hat with a feather on one side, his red quilted satin doublet, padded over the breast and round the arm-holes, the huge puffs of his brown trunk-hose, and the glistening scarlet silk stockings that fitted closely to his shapely legs.

"The ape!" repeated Paul van Swieten. "He is for the Cardinal; that is why he is dressed in red."

"And every inch as Spanish as if he had come straight

from Madrid," cried another lad ; while a third added, "Wibisma did not trouble us with his company while we were on short commons."

"They are all 'Glippers'—all the Wibismas."

"And he swaggers about all day in velvet and silk," said Adrian. "Look at the black boy, too, that the red-legged stork has brought to Leyden with him."

The schoolboys raised a loud laugh, and as the young lordling came close up to them Paul van Swieten snarled in his face, with a nasal twang :

"Well, how did you like your journey, and what is the news from Spain, my lord?" The young grandee drew his head up a little higher, the negro behind him followed his example, and both were going quietly on their way, when Adrian shouted in his ear :

"Hi, young Glipper! tell me for how many pieces of silver Judas betrayed the Redeemer."

Young Matenese van Wibisma started with an angry gesture, but controlled himself, till Jan Mulder stood right in his way, and, pulling off his little cloth cap with a cock's feather stuck into it, held it close under the young exquisite's nose, as if he were begging, and said in a humble tone :

"Give me a trifle for our cat, my lord ; she stole a veal bone yesterday from the butcher."

"Out of my way," said the other, with peremptory haughtiness, as he tried to put Mulder aside with the back of his hand.

"Hands off, Glipper!" cried the schoolboy, raising his fist.

"Then leave me in peace," answered Wibisma ; "I seek no quarrel, and least of all with you."

"And why least of all with us?" asked Adrian van

der Werff, stung by the cool contempt of his tone. The young grandee evasively shrugged his shoulders. Adrian, however, went on: "Because you fancy your Spanish doublet better than our jerkins of Leyden homespun."

Adrian said no more, for Jan Mulder had slipped up behind Wibisma, and hit him a blow on the head with a book, shouting out, while Nicolas van Wibisma tried to lift his cap again, which had been driven over his eyes:

"There, your highness's hat is on tight enough now. You must keep it on now, even before the king."

The negro could not do anything to assist his master, for his hands were full of parcels and notes; nor indeed did the young nobleman appeal to him, for he knew what a coward his black servant was, and he felt himself strong enough to fight his own battle.

In his hat there was a costly brooch, which had been presented to him but lately, on his seventeenth birthday, and which pinned in the waving ostrich plume; but he did not stop to think of that. He snatched off his hat and flung it away, stretched his arms out as if preparing to wrestle, and with an angry glow in his face, shouted the peremptory question:

"Who did that?"

Jan Mulder had hastily slunk back among his companions, and instead of coming forward and proclaiming himself the aggressor, he laughed and said:

"Find out who bonneted you, Glipper! We will play at blindman's-buff."

The question was repeated more emphatically; the lad was beside himself with fury; and when, instead of answering, the boys carried on Jan Mulder's joke, shouting and laughing, "Blindman's-buff! Who bonneted you? Now then, young Glipper; it is your turn first," Nicolas could

no longer contain himself, but roared at the scoffing crew :

“ Dirty low cowards ! ”

Hardly had he said the words when Paul van Swieten flung his grammar, stoutly bound in pig-skin, full in Wibisma's chest, and, amid loud shouting, another and another book followed the *Donatus*, hitting the young grandee on his shoulders and legs. Bewildered by this shower of missiles, and screening his face with his hands, he managed to retreat till he got his back against the wall of the church. There for a moment he stood still, and prepared to rush upon his foes. The stiff and fashionable high Spanish ruff that he wore no longer interfered with the free movement of his handsome head, covered with fair gold curls. He looked his assailants boldly and coolly in the face, stretched his young limbs, which were strong and supple with the practice of all the exercises at that time in use among gentlemen ; and then, with a genuine Dutch oath, flung himself on Adrian van der Werff, who happened to be standing nearest.

After a short struggle, the Burgomaster's son, who was his antagonist's inferior both in age and strength, was lying on the ground ; but the other boys—who had never ceased meanwhile to yell “ Glipper, Glipper ! ”—now laid hands on the young nobleman, who was kneeling on his fallen foe. Nicolas defended himself bravely, but his enemies were too many for him.

Quite beside himself with fury, and losing all control of his wounded pride and vindictive temper, he snatched a dagger from his girdle. The other lads raised a fearful howl, and two of them threw themselves on Wibisma, to snatch away the weapon. In this they soon succeeded, and the dagger was flung on to the pavement, but Van

Swieten jumped back with a cry, for the keen blade had hit his arm, and the blood was flowing and dropping from it.

For some minutes the yells of the boys and the cries of the negro for help had overpowered the solemn sweetness of the organ, which sounded out through the church windows. But suddenly the music ceased ; instead of the fine, sustained body of sound, only the long-drawn dying sigh of a single pipe was audible, and a young man came flying out of the door of the sacristy. He hastily glanced round at the occasion of the wild uproar that had interrupted his studies, and his handsome face, with its fringe of short beard, which at first had worn an expression of considerable alarm, brightened to a smile, though the abuse and blows with which he parted the angry combatants were given in good earnest, and by no means ineffectual.

The schoolboys knew the musician, Wilhelm Corneliussohn, and offered no resistance, for he was a favourite with them, and the dozen or so of years of seniority which he could boast of lent him an undisputed pre-eminence. Not another hand was raised against the noble's son, but the lads crowded round the organ-player, talking as loud as they could, accusing Wibisma and excusing themselves.

Paul van Swieten's wound was trifling ; he stood outside the circle of his comrades, holding his damaged left arm with his right hand ; now and again he blew on the stinging and burning cut to cool it, and he had tied it round with a handkerchief ; but his curiosity as to the issue of the contest was stronger than his anxiety to have it properly treated and bound.

Just as the peacemaker's task was nearly ended, the wounded bystander suddenly exclaimed, as he pointed with his uninjured hand in the direction of the schoolhouse :

"There comes the Seigneur of Nordwyk. You had better let the Glipper go, or mischief will come of it!" The speaker himself, grasping his wounded arm again, ran off as fast as he could round to the other side of the church. Several of the others followed his example; but the new-comer of whom they were so much afraid had young legs—he was not more than thirty—and long legs to boot, and he knew how to use them.

"Stop, you boys!" he cried in a loud tone of command. "Stop! What is going on here?"

Every one in Leyden had the highest respect and esteem for the learned and valiant young nobleman, so those boys who had not promptly acted on Van Swieten's cry of warning, with one consent stood still till the lord of Nordwyk came up with them. A strangely vivid light sparkled in his shrewd glance, and a faint smile curled his moustachioed upper lip as he said to the organ-player :

"What has been doing here, Master Wilhelm? Was the din of these children of Minerva in irreconcilable discord with your performance on the organ, or—— But, by all the colours of Iris's scarf, that is Nico Matenesse— young Wibisma! And what a state he is in! Squabbling, under the very shadow of the church; and you in the thick of it, Adrian! and you too, Master Wilhelm?"

"I was separating them," replied the musician indifferently, and pulling his rumpled cuffs straight.

"Quietly but firmly," laughed the commandant, "as you play the organ. Who began the fray—you, Wibisma, or the others?"

What with discomfiture, excitement, and wrath, Nicolas could find no connected language; but Adrian came forward and said, "He and I had a struggle; pray forgive us, Mynheer Janus."

Nicolas cast a kindly glance at his antagonist.

The Seigneur of Nordwyk, Jan van der Does,—or, as he preferred to be called, being a man of learning, Janus Dousa,—was not altogether satisfied with this explanation, but exclaimed :

“Wait a bit—wait a bit ! You have a very suspicious look about you, Master Adrian ; just come here and tell me, *atrekeos*, the whole and exact truth as to what has occurred.”

The lad did as he was bid, and did it honourably, neither concealing nor excusing any part of the affair.

“Hm !” commented Dousa, when the boy had finished his story ; “an ugly business, in which none of you are free from blame. Your share in it would have looked better but for that knife, my fine gentleman ; but you, Adrian, and you, you fat-faced lubbers, who—— There comes the head-master ; if he catches you, you will certainly see nothing better than four walls for the rest of this lovely day. I should be sorry for that.”

The “fat-faced lubbers,” and Adrian with them, took the hint, and fled without any ceremony of leave-taking, like a flock of doves pursued by a hawk, round the church, and out of sight. As soon as they had disappeared, the commandant went up to young Nicolas.

“A disgraceful affair ! and what is justice to others would serve you right too. Now, go straight home. Are you staying with your aunt ?”

“Yes, my lord,” said the lad.

“And is your father in the city ?” The boy did not answer.

“He does not want to be seen ?” Nicolas nodded assent, and Dousa went on :

“Leyden is open to every Dutchman, you among others.

But, of course, if you swagger about here as the page of King Philip, and treat those who are your equals with scorn, you must take the consequences. There lies your dagger, my young friend, and there is your hat. Pick them both up, and understand for the future that such a weapon is not a plaything; many a man has ruined his whole life in a moment by a thoughtless blow with such a knife; the overpowering number of the enemy may be an excuse for you. But how will you venture to get back to your aunt's house in that torn doublet?"

"I have my cloak in the church," said the musician; "I will lend it to the young gentleman."

"A good idea, Master Wilhelm," replied Dousa. "Wait for it here, Wibisma, and then go home. I would the time could come again when your father would be glad to have a greeting from me. Do you know why he no longer values it?"

"No, my lord."

"Then I will tell you: it is because he likes to hear Spanish, and I stick to Dutch."

"We are Dutch as much as you," retorted Nicolas, with heightened colour.

"Scarcely!" said Dousa coolly, as he laid his hand meditatively on his lean chin, thinking of some friendly word to soften the sharp one. But the lordling exclaimed passionately:

"My Lord of Nordwyk, you will retract that 'scarcely!'"

Dousa gazed in astonishment at the audacious boy, and a smile parted his lips. Then he said kindly:

"Jonker Nicolas, I like you, and if you would indeed be a true Dutchman I should rejoice sincerely. Here comes Master Wilhelm with his cloak. Give me your hand—no, not that one, the other."



Nicolas hesitated ; but Janus took his right hand in both his own, bent his tall figure to the level of the boy's ear, and said, too softly for the musician to catch the words : " Before we part, take this word of warning from one who means well by you : chains, even of gold, must drag you down, but freedom gives men wings. You like to see yourself in the glittering array, but we are trying to cleave the Spanish fetters with our swords, and I pride myself on our work. Remember my words, and if you like you may repeat them to your father."

Janus Dousa turned his back on the lad, nodded farewell to the musician, and went his way.

CHAPTER II.

ADRIAN hastened down the Werffsteg—the street which gave his family its name. He thought neither of the lime-trees that stood on each side of the way, and which were just showing the first tiny green leaves bursting from their pointed sheaths, nor the birds which fluttered hither and thither in the sheltering boughs of the fine old trees, twittering while they built their nests; for, in fact, he had but one idea—how he might most quickly get home.

On the farther side of the bridge that spanned the Achtergracht he stopped, undecided as to his next step, in front of a large building. There was a knocker to the middle door, but he dared not lift it and let it fall again on its brightly-polished plate just below the lock, for he could not hope for a warm welcome from those within.

His jerkin had fared badly in his scuffle with his more stalwart opponent. His torn ruff had been forced to retire from its proper place and office, and had been stuffed into his pocket; and the new violet stocking on his right leg had been cruelly dragged along the pavement, so that its gaping wounds displayed a larger portion of Adrian's white knee than he at all wished. The peacock's feather in his little velvet cap could be easily replaced, but the doublet

was torn, not merely in the seams, but in the cloth, and the stocking was almost past mending.

The boy was honestly sorry, for his father had bidden him take care of his clothes to save cost; times were hard just now in the big house in the Werffsteg, where it displayed a proud and handsome façade, with three doors, and an equal number of high gables with boldly curved outlines, and six windows on the first and second floors.

The office of Burgomaster was not a very lucrative one, and his grandfather's ancestral business—that of buff leather-dressing—with the trade in skins, had fallen off considerably. For the present Van der Werff had his head full of other things—things which claimed not only his thoughts, his strength, and his time, but every spare penny as well.

Adrian, in short, had no pleasant reception to look for, from his father at any rate, and still less from Dame Barbara, his aunt. Yet the lad had less dread of their anger than of a single reproachful look from the eyes of the young woman whom, for just twelve months past, he had learned to call "mother," and who was hardly six years older than himself. She never said an unkind word to him, and all his defiance and perversity melted before her beauty and her calm and dignified sweetness. Whether he really loved her he himself hardly knew; but she had come into his life like one of the good fairies of which he had read, and he often felt as if she were something too tender and delicate and gracious for their simple middle-class home. To see her smile made him happy, and when she looked sad—which was not such a very rare thing—it cut him to the heart. Merciful heaven! how could she look kindly on him when she saw this jerkin, and the ruff in his pocket, and that luckless stocking!

And then he heard a bell again.

Dinner-time was long since past, and his father waited for no one. He who came late went without, unless Aunt Barbara took pity on him in the kitchen.

But what was the good of thinking and hesitating? Adrian plucked up courage, set his teeth, rammed the torn ruff farther into his pocket with his left hand, and with the other lifted the knocker, which fell heavily on its bright steel button.

Truitje, the old servant-maid, opened the door, and in the wide, half-lighted hall, which occupied the ground-floor, and where the rolls of leather stood in crowded array, she saw nothing of his dilapidated outer man.

He hurried upstairs. The dining-room door stood open, and—wonder of wonders!—the table, though laid, was as yet undisturbed; his father must have been detained longer than usual at the town-council. Adrian flew with long strides up to his attic room, dressed himself tidily, and joined the family at table before the master had said grace. He could at a future time hand over the damaged doublet and hose to the repairing care of Aunt Barbara or of Truitje.

Adrian fell to with a will on his steaming platter, but before long he began to feel a weight on his heart, for his father did not speak a word, and sat looking as anxious and as grave as he used at the time when famine had held possession of the beleaguered city.

The young stepmother sat opposite to her husband, constantly glancing across at Peter van der Werff's grave face to meet a loving glance in return; and each time, after failing in the attempt, she pushed the silky golden hair off from her forehead, tossed her pretty little head or bit her lips, and silently gazed at her plate.

To Aunt Barbara's questions—"What took place in the council? Is the money coming in for the new bell?

Did they grant the meadow farm to Jakob van Sloten?" —he answered shortly and evasively.

The stalwart man who thus sat in silence and with knitted brows in the midst of his family, now eating fast and again forgetting to eat at all, did not look like one apt to indulge in idle moods. The whole party, including the maid-servant, were still doing justice to the meal when the master suddenly rose, and, clasping his hands tightly behind his broadly-formed head, exclaimed with a groan : "I can bear it no longer. Say grace, Maria. Janke, go to the town-hall and ask if any messenger has arrived yet."

The serving-man wiped his mouth, and obeyed at once. He was a fine, broad-shouldered Frieslander, but he did not stand taller than to his master's brow.

Peter van der Werff turned his back on the family party without any farther greeting ; opened the door into his study, slammed it behind him as he went in, and went straight up to a large, strongly-wrought desk, on which papers and letters lay piled in high heaps under flat leaden weights, where he proceeded to look through such documents as had lately come to hand. For more than a quarter of an hour he strove in vain to fix his attention on them ; then he dragged his chair forward, and leaned his folded arms on its tall back carved in a simple pierced pattern, while he stared up at the wooden panels of the ceiling. But in a few minutes he pushed the chair away with his foot, parted his moustache and beard with his fingers, and went to the window. Bright and clean as the small, round, leaded panes were kept, they allowed of his seeing but a small section of the street below ; still, the Burgomaster seemed to have discovered what he sought, for he hastily pushed the window open, and called out to his man who was hurrying homewards :

"Look out, Janke! Is he come?"

The man shook his head; the window was flung to again, and a few minutes later the Burgomaster snatched up his hat, which hung on the only wall of the room that was not absolutely bare, below the portrait of a young woman, and between a row of horse-pistols on one side, and a short, unadorned sword on the other. He could no longer endure the torturing suspense that overmastered him within doors.

He would have his horse saddled and ride out to meet the expected messenger. But before leaving the room he once more went to his desk to put his signature to certain papers that were to go to the council; for it might be late before he should return. Still standing, he glanced through the pages before him, and took up his pen. Then the door of the room gently opened, and the clean sand with which the white boards were strewn crunched under a light footstep. He heard it, but did not allow it to disturb him.

His wife was now standing close behind him. Four-and-twenty years younger than he was, she looked like a timid girl as she raised her hand, and yet did not dare touch her husband to attract his attention from his business. She waited quietly till he had signed the first paper, then, putting her pretty head on one side, she said, with downcast eyes and blushing as she spoke:

"Here am I, Peter."

"It is well, my child," he said briefly, lifting the second document to read it.

"Peter," she said a second time, more urgently than before, but still timidly, "I have something to say to you."

Van der Werff turned his head towards her, and gave her a quick but kindly look.

"What now, child?" he said. "You see I am busy, and I have got my hat down to go out."

"But, Peter," she replied, and something like annoyance sparkled in her eyes as she went on with a hardly perceptible accent of complaint, "we have hardly spoken to each other to-day; and my heart is full, and what I wanted to say to you is—must be——"

"When I come home, Maria—not now," he interrupted, and his deep voice was half-impatient, though half-imploping. "First the town, the Commonwealth, and then love-making."

Maria tossed her head at these words, and her lips quivered as she replied:

"That is what you have always said ever since the day we were married."

"Alas, and alas! and so it must continue to be till we have attained our end," he said decisively.

The colour rose in her cheeks, and her breath came quicker.

"Yes," she replied hastily and sharply, "I have been accustomed to such words ever since you came courting, and I am my father's daughter, and never said anything to the contrary; but now they have lost their meaning as between you and me, and what you ought to say is: Everything for my country, and nothing for my wife!"

Van der Werff laid down his pen and turned fully towards his young wife. Her slim figure seemed taller than usual, and her blue eyes looked proudly through the gathering tears. This companion seemed to him to have been created by God for him, and especially for him. His heart went out to her. He held out his hands to this darling of his heart with frank affection, and said earnestly:

"But you know how matters stand. My love is unchangeable, and better times will come."

"When will they come?" said Maria gloomily, as if she doubted of this happy future.

"Soon," said her husband confidently; "soon, if only each is willing to give up what his native land demands."

As he spoke the young woman drew her hands out of her husband's grasp, for the door was opened, and Dame Barbara called out to her brother, without coming in:

"Herr Matenesse van Wibisma, the Glipper, is standing in the hall, and wants to speak to you."

"Bring him up here," said the Burgomaster, much annoyed.

Then, while he was alone again with his wife, he went on: "Will you be reasonable—will you help me?" She nodded and tried to smile. He saw she was not satisfied, and this grieved him; he held out his hands to her again, and repeated:

"Better days will come, believe me, when I can be more to you than I am now. What was it you wanted to say to me?"

"It does not matter whether you hear it or no—it has nothing to do with the State."

"But it has with you. Hold up your head again, and look me in the face. Make haste, sweetheart, for I hear them on the stairs."

"It is not worth mentioning. This day twelve months—to-day we ought to keep our wedding-day."

"Our wedding-day!" cried he, clasping his hands. "Yes, to be sure, the 17th of April—and I had actually forgotten it!"

He drew her tenderly towards him, but the door just

then opened, and Adrian showed the Baron into the room.

Van der Werff bowed politely to his unexpected guest ; then he called after his wife, who was leaving the room with many blushes : " Many happy returns of the day ! I am coming shortly. Adrian, to-day must be held as a high festival : it is our wedding-day you must remember."

The boy hastily escaped through the door he held in his hand ; for he foresaw that this illustrious visitor boded him no good. He stopped in the hall to consider ; then he ran quickly upstairs, snatched up his featherless cap, and hurried out of the house.

Out in the street he found his schoolfellows setting themselves in battle array, with sticks and poles for arms. He would have liked very much to join in the mock fight ; but, for that very reason, he would not at this moment stop to hear the shouts of the contending parties, and he ran on towards the Zylgate till he was out of the sound of their voices. He then went more slowly, and, bending down—often on his knees even—he followed the course of a narrow canal, which flowed at last into the Rhine.

As soon as he had filled his cap with the white, blue, and yellow flowers he gathered on its banks, he sat down on a corner-stone, arranged them in a pretty, gay nosegay, and then, with sparkling eyes, ran off home again. On the sunny bench by the door sat the old nurse with his little six-year-old sister. To her he entrusted the flowers which, till then, he had carried hidden behind his back : " Take these, *Liesje*," said he, " and carry them up to mother. To-day is her wedding-day, I know. And say something pretty to her from you and me." The child rose to obey him, and the old servant said :

" Well done, Adrian ; you are a real good fellow !"

“Do you think so?” he said, all his sins of the forenoon rising before his conscience,—not, however, with any particular sense of repentance; on the contrary, there was a roguish twinkle in his eye, and he smiled as he patted the old woman on the shoulder, and whispered in her ear: “I had a fight this morning, Truitje. Up in my room, under the bed, you will find my doublet and my new hose; now, no one can darn so cleverly as you can.” Truitje shook her finger at him, but he hastily turned away, and ran off again towards the Zylgate, to lead the Spaniards against the Dutch.

CHAPTER III.

THE Burgomaster had made his noble visitor seat himself in the study chair, while he himself leaned, half-sitting, on the desk, and listened to the nobleman's story, not without impatience.

"Before speaking of more important matters," said Matenesse van Wibisma, "I should like to appeal to you, as a just man, to punish the insults that a member of my family has had to submit to in this town."

"Speak on!" said the Burgomaster; and the Baron related briefly, but with undisguised indignation, the attack on his son near St. Peter's Church.

"I will tell the Rector of the school of this vexatious business," replied Van der Werff, "and justice and retribution shall fall upon the guilty; but you must excuse me, noble sir, if I ask you whether any one has as yet inquired who it was that offered the first provocation?"

Wibisma stared at the Burgomaster in astonishment, and answered haughtily:

"I have told you the story as my son told it."

"Both sides must be heard in the case," replied Van der Werff coolly; "it has been the usage in the Netherlands from the remotest ages."

"My son bears my name, and he speaks the truth."

"Our sons are only called Leendert,¹ or Adrian, or Gerrit,² but they do the same; and I must therefore request you to send your noble son to tell his story before the general tribunal of the school."

"That I certainly will not," said the other positively. "If I thought that this was any concern of the headmaster's I should have applied at once to him, and not to you, Master Peter. My son has his own tutor, and he was not attacked within the precincts of the school—indeed, he is too old to have anything to do with it, as he is nearly seventeen—but out in the public street, where it is your business, as Burgomaster, to protect the public safety."

"Very good; then draw up your accusation, take your son before the assessors, bring your witnesses, and let justice take its course. But, my lord," Van der Werff went on, moderating the irritation of his tones, "were you never young yourself? Have you forgotten the frays under the walls of the Burcht? What pleasure or good could it do you if a few thoughtless wights were shut up in a cell in this sweet, sunny weather? The little rascals would find some mischief to amuse themselves with as well inside as outside, and no one would be really punished but the parents."

The last words were spoken with so much frank kindness and good temper that they could not fail of their effect on the nobleman. He was a handsome man, and his well-formed, good-natured, and thoroughly Dutch features revealed a nature anything rather than stern.

"If you speak in that key," he answered, smiling, "we shall easily be in harmony. But one thing let me tell you. Whether this fray arose in sport or in some boyish squabble, I will waste no words on the matter; but the fact that

¹ Leonard.

² Gerard.

mere children dare to attack those whose opinions are different from those they have been brought up in, and to treat them with insult and violence, ought not to be passed over without chastisement. The boys called my son by that silly name——”

“It is certainly an ugly word,” interrupted the Burgomaster ;—“a foul name that our common folks have given to the foes of our freedom.”

The Baron rose and stood close to his interlocutor, face to face.

“Who tells you,” he exclaimed, slapping his broad, silk-padded chest—“who tells you that we grudge Holland her freedom? We wish just as eagerly as you do to win back freedom for the Low Countries, but by other and more direct ways than Orange——”

“As to whether your ways are straight or crooked, my lord,” retorted Van der Werff, “it is not my business here to decide. But this much I know for certain—they are dark ways.”

“They lead straight to the heart of King Philip—our king and yours.”

“Ay, if he had such a thing as we in Holland call a heart,” retorted Van der Werff, with a bitter laugh. But Wibisma drew himself up angrily, and said reprovingly :

“Herr Burgomaster, you are speaking of the anointed sovereign to whom I have sworn allegiance.”

“Baron Matenese,” answered the Burgomaster with stern determination, drawing himself up too, and crossing his arms, as he looked the nobleman straight in the face, “I am speaking, on the contrary, of the tyrant who regards everything Dutch as treasonable, and us—ay, and you too—as criminals worthy only of death ; who, by the hands of that avenging devil Alva, has burnt, hanged, and beheaded

thousands of honest men,—has robbed thousands more of all their possessions, and driven them exiles from their native land. I am speaking of the ruthless oppressor——”

“This is enough,” said the Baron, laying his hand on his sword. “What right have you——”

“What right have I to use such harsh and bitter words, would you ask?” interrupted Van der Werff, with a dark scowl at his visitor’s eyes. “What right? I need not be ashamed to declare it. I derived that right from the silent lips of my noble father, who was beheaded for his faith; I derive it from the arbitrary decree which drove me and my brethren, without trial or hearing, out from this land; I derive it from the broken oaths of the Spaniard, the outraged amnesty granted to us, the misery of this hapless, oppressed, and indomitable people, who must perish if we do not save them.”

“You will not save them,” replied Wibisma in a quieter tone. “You are thrusting the people, who are already fallen into an abyss, farther and finally into its depths, and you yourself will perish with them.”

“We are pilots; perhaps we may bring salvation—perhaps we may founder with those for whom we are ready to die.”

“You say all this, and yet you have linked your life to that of a young and lovely woman.”

“My lord Baron, you crossed my threshold as a plaintiff to the Burgomaster—not as my friend or as my guest.”

“Very true; but I came to warn you as the leading spirit in this fair and hapless city. You have ridden through the storm once, but others and far heavier ones are gathering over your head.”

“We do not dread them.”

“Not even now?”

"Now less than ever, and with good reason."

"Then you do not know that the Prince's brother——"

"Louis of Nassau fell upon the Spanish on the 14th, and our side had the advantage——"

"At first, no doubt, they did well,"

"The messenger who arrived last night——"

"But ours came this morning."

"This morning, do you say? And then——"

"The Prince's forces were beaten at Mooker Heyde, and completely dispersed; Louis of Nassau himself was left dead."

Van der Werff clenched his hand with a hard grip on the edge of the desk; the ruddy hue of his lips and cheeks had faded to ashy paleness, and as he asked in a low, hollow voice, "Louis dead! actually dead?" his lips twitched painfully.

"Dead," repeated the Baron decidedly and gloomily.

"We were enemies, but Louis of Nassau was a noble youth, and I bewail him with you."

"Dead! William of Orange's worthy favourite—dead!" muttered the Burgomaster to himself, as if it were a dream. Then he collected himself with an effort, and said in a firm voice:

"Your lordship will excuse me; the hours are flying. I must be off to the town-hall."

"And there, in spite of my information, you will persist in giving the word of revolt?"

"Ay, sir—so sure as I am a Dutchman."

"Remember the fate of Haarlem."

"I remember the endurance of its citizens and the relief of Alkmaar."

"Man, man!" cried the Baron; "I adjure you by all that is holy, let yourselves be warned."

"Enough, my lord ; I must go to the council room."

"Nay, one word more—only one word. I know you call us 'Glippers,' sneaks, deserters, and what not besides ; but as surely as I hope for God's mercy you misjudge us. No, Master Peter, I am no traitor. I love this land and this brave and industrious folk as ardently as you do, for the same blood flows in my veins. I too subscribed the compromise. Here I stand, look at me. Do I look like a Judas ? Do I look like a Spaniard ? And can you take it as crime that I should keep the oath I have sworn to the king ? How long have Dutchmen trifled with their oaths ? You, the friend of Orange, have pledged yourself to allow each man to live in the creed he believes in, and I will not doubt your word. Well, then, I cling to the Old Church ; I am a Catholic, and mean to remain so. But here and now I openly acknowledge I hate the Inquisition and Alva's bloody measures as much as you do ; but they are no more a part of our faith than iconoclasm is a part of yours. I love the freedom of my native land as well as you do, and to recover it is the end and aim of my endeavour as it is of yours. But how can we, a mere handful of men, ever succeed in resisting the mightiest country in the world ? Even if we conquer once, twice, thrice, each defeated army will be followed by two new ones, stronger than the last. We shall gain nothing by force, but we may by prudent yielding and wise counsel. Philip's coffers are empty, and he wants his armies in other countries. Very good ; then let us turn his necessities to advantage, and compel him to grant a new charter of freedom to every revolted town that returns to its allegiance. Let us buy back our ancient rights with what remains of our former wealth—the rights which he snatched from us in war against the insurgents. You will find me and my

fellow-thinkers liberal and open-handed. Your voice has great weight in the council of this town ; you are the friend of Orange, and if you could persuade him——”

“To what, noble sir?”

“To join in alliance with us. We know that his supreme importance is duly appreciated and dreaded at Madrid, and we would make an unconditional pardon for him and his followers the first term of the agreement. King Philip, I know, would take him into favour again.”

“Would clasp him in his arms to throttle him !” retorted the Burgomaster shortly. “And have you, my lord, forgotten the false promises of pardon of former days? Have you forgotten the fate of Egmont and Horn, of the noble Montigny, and our other nobles? They ventured into the tiger’s den. What we pay for to-day will be ruthlessly snatched from us again to-morrow, for what oath did Philip ever hold sacred? I am no statesman, but one thing I too surely know : if he were to restore us every other form of liberty, that one without which life is worthless he would never grant.”

“And which is that, Master Peter?”

“That of believing as our hearts direct and guide us. You, noble lord, mean honestly ; but you trust the Spaniard and we do not, and if we did, we should be betrayed. You have nothing to fear for your faith ; we, on the contrary, everything. You think that the strength of armies and the power of gold will decide the issue of the contest ; we comfort ourselves with the hope that God will at last give the victory to a brave nation that is prepared to face a thousand deaths for freedom’s sake. That is my opinion, and I shall uphold it in the council.”

“No, Master Peter, no ! you cannot—you must not.”

"What I can do is but little ; but what I must and will do is written in my heart, and I shall act upon it."

"In doing so you will follow the counsels of your offended feelings rather than your deliberate judgment, and will be able to give none but bad advice. Remember, Orange's last army has been cut to pieces at Mooker Heyde."

"Very true, my lord ; and for that very reason we must turn the moment to account for acting and not for talking."

"That, Burgomaster, is as true for me as for you ; there are still many friends of the King's in the city who must be taught that they are not to follow you blindly to the scaffold."

At these words Van der Werff stepped back a pace or two from the nobleman, laid his right hand gravely on his beard, and said coldly and imperiously, somewhat raising the tones of his deep voice :

"Then, as protector of the safety of this town, I command you to quit Leyden at once. If you are still within these walls after noon to-morrow, I will see that you are conducted beyond the precincts by the town sergeants."

The Baron went away without any kind of farewell greeting. As soon as the door was fairly closed behind him, Van der Werff threw himself into his arm-chair, and covered his face with his hands ; and when, presently, he sat up again, two heavy tears had dropped on the paper that had lain under his fingers. He smiled bitterly as he dashed them off the written page with the back of his hand.

"Dead," he muttered,—"**dead !**" And the image of the brave young hero, the prudent mediator, William of Orange's dearest favourite, rose before his mind's eye ; he wondered how this fresh stroke of fate would affect the Prince whom he revered as the incarnate **Providence** of



the Low Countries, and admired and loved as the wisest and least selfish of men. William's loss was as great a grief to him as if it had been his own, and the blow thus dealt to the cause of freedom was a heavy one—perhaps irreparable. However, he could only spare a few minutes to indulge his sorrow ; for now, and at once, every nerve must be strained to recover by fresh deeds of valour the ground they had lost, to avert the consequences of Louis's overthrow, which threatened to be serious, and to resolve on new means of resistance. He paced his room with knitted brows, planning prompt measures, and pondering on plans of action.

His wife had opened the door, and stood on the threshold, but he did not see her till she spoke his name, and came towards him. She held in her hand some of the flowers that the boy had brought her, and the remainder she had placed in the bosom of her dress.

"Take these," she said, offering him the nosegay. "That dear boy Adrian gathered them for me, and you know the occasion he meant them to honour."

He took the spring offering with a kindly gesture, and put them to his face ; then clasping Maria to his breast, he pressed a long kiss on her forehead, and said sadly :

"So this is the first anniversary of our wedding-day ! Poor little wife ! The Glipper was not so far wrong ; perhaps it would have been wiser and better if I had never linked your fate to mine."

"Peter !" she exclaimed reproachfully. "What put such thoughts into your head ?"

"Louis of Nassau is killed," he said gloomily ; "his army is dispersed."

"Oh !" cried the young wife, clasping her hands in dismay, while he went on : "It was our last hope of resist-


ance. The coffers are empty, and whence we are to get more money, and what will happen next—that——Maria, my wife, I must beg you to leave me to myself. If we do not now redeem the time,—if we cannot now find a way,—evil will come of it; nothing but evil can come of it.”

With these words he tossed the flowers on to the table, snatched up some papers, and, as he looked through them, waved his hand to her without looking up again.

The young wife had come into the room with her heart full, and open to tender emotion. She had hoped for so much from this moment of effusion, and now she stood lonely in the room though he was actually before her. She dropped her arms wearily by her side, and stood looking at him—spiritless, abashed, and hurt.

Maria had grown up in the midst of the struggle for freedom, and could fully appreciate the sorrowful gravity of the news she had heard. When he had courted her, he had warned her that she must expect a life of anxiety and danger if she stood by his side, and she had nevertheless joyfully gone to the altar with this brave defender of the good cause which had also been her father's, for she had hoped to share in his sorrows and his struggles. And now? What could she be to him after all? What did he want of her? What was there that he was ready to let her share with him, on this, their wedding-day—with her, who was not wont to yield to weakness? And as she stood there, the open springs of feeling shrank and closed, and she could not humble herself to address him again,—to tell him that she would bear his troubles and share his perils just as gladly as his happiness and prosperity.

He had now found the document he was in search of, and, taking his hat, he turned to her again. How pale



and disappointed she looked ! He was cut to the heart ; he would so gladly have poured out in words all his deep and great love for her, and have responded to her happy wishes ; but at this moment, with this grief and anxiety weighing upon his soul, he could not ; he only held out both hands to her and said feelingly :

“ You know all that you are to me, Maria—or, if you do not, I will tell you this evening. I must now join the council at the town-hall, or the whole day will be lost, and in these times every moment is precious. Well, Maria ? ”

She was looking at the floor. She felt ready to fly to his breast, but her wounded pride forbade it ; a mysterious power seemed to hold her hands and keep her from placing them in his.

“ Goodbye,” she said sullenly.

“ Maria ! ” he exclaimed reproachfully, “ to-day is indeed ill chosen for grudging and sulks. Come, be my own reasonable wife.”

Still she would not yield at once ; and he, hearing the clock strike four, which was the hour when the town-council rose from their sitting, went out of the room without looking round at her again.

The little bunch of flowers still lay on the desk ; that she observed, and she could hardly refrain from tears.


CHAPTER IV.

A LARGE number of citizens had assembled in front of the fine town-hall. The news of Louis of Nassau's defeat and death had rapidly spread through the eighteen wards of the town, and every one was eager to get fuller information, as well as to give utterance to his grief and alarm, and to learn what measures the council had to propose for the immediate future.

Two successive messengers had only too surely confirmed the information given by the Baron Matenesse van Wibisma. Louis was dead, his brother Henry was missing, and the army wholly destroyed.

The secretary to the council, Jan van Hout, the same who that morning had given the boys their lessons, now appeared at a window and announced to the citizens the terrible blow that had fallen on their country's freedom, exhorting them in glowing words, now if ever, to stake their life and hopes in the good cause.

His speech was hailed with loud shouts. Many-coloured caps and plumed hats waved in the air, swords and poniards were flourished, and the women and children, who had forced a way among the crowd, fluttered their handkerchiefs, and out-shouted the men with their shriller voices.



Then the members of the valiant town-watch collected together to charge their captain to convey to the council their declaration that, as the city guard, they were ready to stand by William of Orange to the last drop of blood in their veins, and the last coin in their pockets, and that they would die for the cause of Holland rather than live under the tyranny of the Spaniard. And among these there was many a grave face of deep concern ; for each and all of these men, whose ranks were filled by volunteers, was personally devoted to the Prince of Orange ; his grief was theirs, and the evil plight of the land cut them to the heart.

No sooner had the four Burgomasters shown themselves at the window with the eight town assessors, and such of the members of the town-council as were present, than hundreds of voices joined in the song of the Gueux, which had already been struck up by a few here and there in the crowd ; and when at sunset the genial-natured people dispersed, and, still singing, went off arm-in-arm, in twos and threes, to the taverns, to confirm their faith in better days, and forget their many justifiable anxieties in a draught of cool wine, the market-place of Leyden, and the streets leading into it, looked exactly as though the proclamation of a victory had been read out by the council.

The shouts of defiance and the "beggars'" hymn had rung out bravely enough ; but so many hundred of Dutch lungs and throats were very capable of making the air vibrate to far more ominous sounds, and this reflection occurred to three well-dressed citizens who were going along the Breede Straat (Broad Street), past the Blue Stone. The eldest of these observed to his companions :

" Ah ! they may brag and shout, and think great things of themselves now, but we shall live to see a very different state of things."

"God preserve us from the worst," replied another ;
"but now the Spaniards will undoubtedly fall on us again,
and in my ward alone, I know many a man who will not
vote for resistance this time."

"And they are right ;—a thousand times I say they
are right. Requesens is not a second Alva, and if we
show ourselves ready to accept the King's clemency——"

"There would be no blood shed, and all would be for
the best."

"Well, I am Dutch, and far from Spanish," observed
the third ; "but, after Mooker Heyde, resistance is hopeless.
The Prince of Orange may be a fine fellow, but I love my
skin better than my coat."

"And after all, is he the only consideration for which
we are bound to risk our lives and property ?"

"That is just what my wife said yesterday."


"He does nothing to promote trade ; no one less.
Take my word for it, there are many who think as we do ;
and if it were not so the shout of the Gueux would have
sounded louder still."

"To three wise men there are always five fools," said the
elder citizen. "I took care not to open my mouth."

"And what is there so great after all under the shout
of liberty ? Alva burnt those who read their Bibles, and
De la Marc hangs the priests. My wife likes going to
mass, but when she does it is always in secret, and as if
she were doing something wrong."

"We cling too to the old faith."

"Faith here and faith there," said the third ; "we are
Calvinists, but I am tired of throwing money into the
maw of Orange, and it can be no particular pleasure to
me to see the poles by the Cow Gate on which my wool is
hung torn up again before the wind has fairly dried the yarn."



"Only let us hold together," advised the elder. "The people dare not speak out what they really mean, and every ragged adventurer thinks he may play the hero. But I tell you that in every ward of the town, and every guild, and even in the town-council and among the Burgomasters, there are plenty of reasonable men."

"Hush," whispered the second speaker, "here comes Van der Werff, with the town-clerk and the young Seigneur van der Does—they are the worst of them all."

The three friends were, in fact, coming down the Broad Street conversing eagerly, but in low tones.

"My uncle is right, Master Peter," said Jan van der Does—that same commandingly tall man whom we saw in the morning dismiss Nicolas van Wibisma with a well-deserved lecture ;—"there is no help for it ; you must seek the Prince and take counsel with him."

"I must, I see," replied the Burgomaster. "I will set out to-morrow——"

"Before to-morrow," said the Town-clerk, interrupting him. "The Prince rides fast, and if you fail to find him in Delft——"

"Will you start before me ?" said Van der Werff ; "you have the papers and minutes of our sitting."

"I cannot possibly ; but you, the Prince's friend—how is it that to-day, for the first time, your readiness is at fault ?"

"You are right, Jan," cried the Burgomaster ; "and you shall know what it is that withholds me."

"If it is anything that a friend can assist or relieve you in, here I stand," said the Seigneur of Nordwyk. Van der Werff took the hand the Baron offered him with a hearty grasp, and answered, smiling, "No, my friend,—no. You know my young wife ; this day we were to have kept our first

wedding-day, and, with all this trouble, to my shame I had forgotten it."

"It is hard—very hard," said Van Hout softly. Then he drew himself up and added: "And yet, in your place I would set out in spite of Dame Maria."

"You would set out to-day, do you mean?"

"To-day—for to-morrow it may be too late. Who can tell how soon all egress may be closed, and before we can once more venture to resort to extreme measures we must absolutely know what the Prince's views are. He is the head and we the hands. You, Master Peter, know him better than we do."

"And God knows how gladly I would carry him a word of consolation at this melancholy time; and yet it cannot be to-day, for the messenger took my horse to ride forward."

"Then take my bay—and it is swifter too," said Janus Dousa; and Van der Werff hastily replied:

"Many thanks, my lord. I will send for it early in the morning."

The secretary coloured angrily, and he stuck his hand into his girdle.

"Send me the bay, Jonker," he said, "if the Burgomaster will grant me leave of absence."

"Nay, send it round to me," said Peter coolly. "What must be, must! I will start to-day."

Van Hout's manly countenance brightened again at once; he took the Burgomaster's hand in both his own, saying eagerly:

"Thanks, a thousand thanks, Master Peter, and take it as I mean it. You know how hot-headed I am. If your young wife is dull in your absence, send her to see mine."

"And mine," added Dousa. "There is one very

strange thing about these two little words 'like' and 'ought.' The freer and the better a man is, the more certainly is the second master of the first."

"And yet I dare wager, Master Peter, that your wife this day has confounded those two little words, and will firmly believe that you have sinned grievously against 'ought.' Ah! these are bad times for 'like.'"

Van der Werff nodded assent, and then proceeded to explain to his friends, briefly but decidedly, what he proposed to lay before the Prince.

The three men parted in front of the Burgomaster's house.

"Tell His Highness," said Van Hout, as they separated, "that we are prepared for the worst; we can resist and dare all."

As he spoke Dousa gazed fixedly at his two colleagues; his lips quivered a little, as was their wont when any deep emotion stirred his soul; and the satisfaction of assured confidence brightened his shrewd face as he exclaimed:

"We three will hold out—we three will stand firm. The tyrant may break our necks, but he shall never bend them. Body and soul, gold and goods—all that man holds precious, or dear, or serviceable—we will sacrifice for the highest good."

"Ay," said Van der Werff gravely and distinctly; and the town-clerk eagerly added: "Ay, indeed—to the very uttermost!"

For a moment the three men of equal mind held each other's hands in a firm grasp. An unspoken oath bound them, and as they turned away, the Baron of Nordwyk in one direction, and Van Hout in another, the neighbours who met them on their road could almost have thought that their stately height had grown in that hour.

The Burgomaster went at once to his wife's room, but did not find her there; she had gone for a walk beyond the town gates with his sister. The maid carried a light into his sitting-room, whither he followed her; he proved the locks of his heavy pistols, girded on his old sword, put all he needed into his saddle-bags, and, his preparations ended, took to pacing his room in strong excitement, his thoughts full of the task before him.

The Seigneur of Nordwyk's horse was soon heard pawing the pavement in front of the door, and the evening star shone down above the roofs. He heard the house door slam, and went down into the hall, but he found only Adrian, who had just come in, and not his wife. He therefore charged the lad with a tender message to his mother, telling her that he was forced to go after the Prince on business of the utmost importance.

The old serving-maid had already undressed and washed little Elizabeth, and she now brought the child wrapped in a coverlet for him to say good-night to her. He kissed the sweet little face that laughed at him out of its swaddling wraps, pressed a kiss too on Adrian's brow, once more bid him convey a loving message to his mother, and then rode off down the Marendorp Street. Before he had reached St. Stephen's two women came past him returning from the Rhineburg Gate. He did not observe them, but the younger of the two pushed back her kerchief and looked after him; then suddenly clutching her companion's wrist, she exclaimed in a low voice:

"That was Peter!"

Dame Barbara looked up.

"It is lucky that I am not nervous. Do not hold my arm so tightly! Do you mean the horseman who is riding past St. Ursula's Lane yonder?"

"Yes ; it is Peter."

"Nonsense, child ; his brown horse has shorter legs than that camel of a beast ; besides, Peter never rides out at this hour."

"But it was Peter, all the same !"

"Heaven forbid ! But in the dark, you cannot tell a lime from a beech. As if he would not come home to-day of all days—that would be a pretty state of things !"

The last words escaped Dame Barbara's lips quite unintentionally, for until that moment she had very prudently behaved as though she had no suspicion of all not being quite as it should be between Maria and her husband, though all that was passing in her young sister-in-law's mind was perfectly clear to her penetration. She was a discreet woman, with much experience of the world, who by no means undervalued her brother nor his importance and value to the State ; nay, she went so far as to believe that next to the Prince of Orange, there was not a man on earth better able to conduct the cause of freedom to a good issue than Peter ; still, she felt that he was not altogether just to Maria, and Barbara herself, being a true woman, silently took part against the man for his neglect of his wife. For a while the two women walked on in silence ; at last the widow stood still, exclaiming :

"Very likely the Prince has sent for Peter. In times like these, and after such a blow, everything is possible. It may be that you were right after all."

"It certainly was Peter," said Maria positively.

"Poor fellow !" said the other ; "it must be a dismal ride for him ! In the increase of honour there is sorrow. You have no reason to hang your head, for your husband will come back to-morrow or next day ; while I—look at me, Maria—I go through life brisk and busy, and do my

day's work cheerfully ; my cheeks are rosy, and I relish my food—and yet I have had to resign all I held best and dearest. For ten years I have been a widow ; my Gretchen has married away from me ; and I sent Wilhelm away myself to join the Sea-Gueux, as they call them. He may be taken at any hour, for his whole life is one long peril. What has a widow but her only son ? and I gave him up for the good of the country ! That is a harder thing than to see your husband ride out for a few hours on your wedding-day. You may be sure he did not do it for his pleasure !”

“ Here we are at home,” said Maria, knocking at the door. Truitje opened the door, and Barbara at once called out :

“ Is the master at home ? ” The answer was a negative, and indeed they had expected nothing else.

Adrian delivered his message ; Truitje brought in the supper, but the conversation could not rise above “ yes ” and “ no.”

No sooner had Maria hastily said grace, than she rose from table, and said, turning to Barbara :


“ My head aches ; I should like to go to bed.”

“ Yes, go and rest,” answered the widow. “ I will sleep in the little room adjoining, and leave the door open between.

In darkness and quiet,
Our wits run riot.”

Maria kissed her sister-in-law with sincere warmth of feeling, and went to bed ; but she could not sleep, and tossed uneasily about till nearly midnight. Then she heard Barbara's cough in the next room, and, sitting up in bed, called out, “ Sister, are you asleep ? ”

“ No, my child—are you feeling ill ? ”



"No, I am not ill; but I am so anxious—so worried with tormenting fancies."

Barbara lighted a taper at the night-lamp, carried it into the room, and sat down on the edge of her bed. It grieved her to the heart as she looked at the pretty young creature lying sorrowful and lonely on the huge bed, and unable to sleep for bitter disappointment and wounded feeling. She thought she had never seen Maria look so sweet and lovely; she looked like a mourning angel in her white night-dress among the pillows, and Barbara could not help stroking her yellow hair off her forehead, and kissing her faintly-rosy cheek.

Maria looked gratefully up into the widow's small, pale blue eyes, and said humbly:

"I want to ask you something."

"Well?"

"But you must tell me the real honest truth."

"That is asking a great deal."

"I know, of course, that you are honest—but there are cases——"

"Well, speak out at any rate."

"Were Peter and his first wife happy together?"

"Yes, child—yes."

"And you know it not only of him, but of Eva herself too?"

"Yes, my little sister."

"And you cannot be mistaken?"

"Not on that point—certainly not. But what has put such ideas into your head? 'Let the dead bury their dead,' the Scripture says. Now, turn over and try to sleep."

Barbara went back to bed, but many hours had dragged along before Maria could find the sleep she longed for.

CHAPTER V.

NEXT morning two men on horseback, dressed in handsome servants' livery, were standing in front of a handsome house in the Nobel Straat, not far from the market-place. A third was leading two saddled horses, of powerful build, and with pronounced Roman noses, up and down the street, while a stable-boy held the bridle of a long-maned and smartly-caparisoned nag. This was to carry the young negro who stood within the doorway, and kept the street boys who ventured to approach him at a respectful distance by rolling his eyes fearfully, and gnashing his white teeth.

"Where can they be?" said one of the mounted men.

"It will rain before the day is much older."

"That it certainly will," replied the other. "The sky is as dark as my old hat, and by the time we reach the wood it will come down."

"There is a nasty wet mist already."

"This cold, damp weather is what I hate."

"Strap the flaps over the holsters closer; and the cloak-case at the back of the Baron's saddle does not sit straight.

. . . So! Did the cook fill your flask?"

"Yes, with brown Spanish—there it is."

"Then the weather may do what it likes. When a

man can wet his whistle he can bear a good deal of moisture outside."

"Lead the horses up to the door. I hear the gentlemen coming."

The horseman was right; for, before his companion had succeeded in persuading the tall gray horses to stand still, the voices of his master, the Baron Matenesse van Wibisma, and of his son Nicolas, were heard in the large hall. They both were taking friendly leave of a young girl, whose voice sounded fuller and deeper than that of the half-grown stripling. Just as the elder gentleman had twisted his hand in his horse's mane, and had already lifted his foot to place it in the stirrup, the young lady, who had remained in the hall, came out into the street, and, laying her hand on Wibisma's arm, said :

"One word more, uncle—with you, alone."

The Baron kept hold of the horse's mane, and said with a pleasant smile :

"If it is not too much for the horse to carry. But a secret from beautiful lips is an onerous burden !"

And he bent his ear over to his niece ; but she did not seem disposed to whisper her communication, for she came no nearer, and only spoke in a slightly lower tone, but in Italian.

"Explain to my father," she said, "that I shall not stay here."

"But, Henrika !"

"Tell him I will not stay in any case."

"But your aunt will not let you go."

"Once for all, I will not stay here."

"I will tell him, but in somewhat milder words, if you have no objection."

"That is as you please. Tell him, then, that I must

request him to send to fetch me away. If he does not choose himself to step into this nest of heretics—for which I cannot blame him—he can send horses or the coach for me.”

“And your reasons?”

“Ah! I will not burden your horse any farther. Start at once, or the saddle will be wet before you set out.”

“Then I may tell Hoogstraten to expect a letter?”

“No; such things cannot be written. Nor, indeed, is it necessary. Tell my father I will not stay with my aunt, and want to go home. Adieu, Nico! Your riding-boots and green cloth jerkin become you far better than silken frippery.”

The young girl kissed her hand to the younger Baron, who had long been settled in his saddle, and hastened into the house again. Her uncle shrugged his shoulders, mounted his steed, drew his dark cloak more closely round him, beckoned Nicolas to his side, and rode on ahead of the servants. So long as their road lay through the town they did not exchange a word, but when they had got outside the gates, Wibisma said:

“Henrika finds the time hang heavy in Leyden, and wishes to go back to her father.”

“Well, it cannot be easy to live with my aunt!” replied his son.

“She is old and ailing, and has had a joyless life.”

“But she must have been handsome once. There is not much to be seen of it now, but her eyes are still those of the portrait—and then she is rich.”

“That cannot make a woman happy!”

“But why did she remain unmarried?”

The Baron shrugged his shoulders and replied:

“It was not the fault of the men.”

“Or why did she not go into a convent?”

"Who can tell? Women's hearts are harder to read than your Greek books, as you will learn one day. What were you doing with your aunt when I went up?"

"See here," said the lad, holding his bridle between his teeth while he drew the glove from his left hand. "She put this ring on my finger."

"That is a fine emerald! And she is not fond of parting with such things."

"She offered me another at first, and said she gave it me to make amends for the blows I got yesterday for being faithful to the King. Is not that funny?"

"More than funny in my opinion."

"And it went against me, too, to take a present in payment for my bruises; so I drew back my hand, and said that the town boys had had something from me to take home with them too; but that I would take the ring as a reward for that, if she chose."

"Right, boy—very right!"

"So she said too, and she put the smaller ring back in the jewel-case, and took out this one, and put it on."

"A very valuable gem!" said the Baron; and he thought to himself: "This gift is a good sign. He and Henrika Hoogstraten are her next heirs, and if the foolish girl does not choose to stay with her, it might happen——"

But he had not time to work out his calculations to an end, for the youth interrupted them by saying:

"There is the rain beginning! And does not the mist over the meadows look like clouds come down bodily from the sky? I am freezing!"

"Pull your cloak over you."

"How it rains and hails! One might fancy it was winter again. The water in the ditches looks perfectly black—and out there—look! what is that?"

By the roadside stood a tavern, in front of which stood a solitary, very tall elm, whose trunk, as bare as a mast, had grown as straight as a taper, and had not thrown out a branch below the height of a small house. Spring had not yet decked its twigs with a single leaflet, and yet there was something noteworthy to be seen in its bare crown. To one of the branches a little flag had been fastened with the colours of the House of Orange, while from another hung a large puppet, or manikin, which, from a distance, was deceptively like a man dressed in black ; on a third was stuck an old hat ; and on a fourth was a sheet of white paper, on which these words were legible in large black characters, though the rain was beginning to wash them out :—

Death to Spain and may Orange win !
Is Quatgelat's motto, so here turn in.

The queerly-decorated tree presented anything rather than an encouraging appearance in the cold gray mist of a rainy April day. Some ravens had settled on it, near the figure which danced and see-sawed in the wind, taking it, no doubt, for a man who had been hanged ; they must be birds hard to teach by experience, for during the many years that the Spaniards had ruled in Holland the gallows had never been idle. They croaked out their disappointment, but remained sitting on the tree, which, no doubt, they mistook for a gibbet. The rest of the decoration, and the notion of the nimble dare-devil who must have climbed the tree to fix it all, was thrown into hideous relief by the travesty of supreme justice which was thus suggested. Nicolas, however, laughed loudly as he spied the strange objects on the elm-boughs, and pointing to them, exclaimed :

“ There is queer fruit on that tree ! ” But, even as he

spoke, a cold shudder ran down his back, for a raven had perched on the black puppet, and pecked and hacked at it so violently that the figure and the bird together swung to and fro like a pendulum.

"What does this mad nonsense mean?" asked the Baron, turning to one of the grooms riding behind him, a bold and wide-awake young fellow.

"It is a kind of sign of the inn here," he answered; "yesterday, with the sun shining on it, it looked funny enough—but to-day—b-r-r—it is a thing to shudder at!"

The nobleman's eyes were not keen enough to read the inscription on the placard; when Nicolas had read it to him he muttered a strong oath. Then, turning to the groom again, he asked:

"And does this tomfoolery bring customers to the blackguard innkeeper, do you say?"

"Yes, my lord. And on my soul, yesterday, before those foul birds had come down upon it, it looked devilish funny—you could not look at it without laughing. Half Leyden was out here, and we came with the ruck. Out there on the grass-plot the place was alive and jolly. Dum-de-dum—tootle-too—fiddles squeaking, and bagpipes grunting—there was no end of it. And the mad crowd shouting all the time—I can hear them now!—and gaming and dancing. The lads throwing up their stockinged legs—red, blue, and brown—as the fiddles played, and their coats flying; with a wench on one arm, and a tankard held so high over their heads that the froth flew about, round they went, round and round. There was as much shouting and hurrahing as though all the buttercups on the grass had been turned into gold pieces. But to-day—holy Saint Florian! how it pours."

"So much the better for that foul gear," cried the

Baron. "If it were not that in such a downpour I should get my tinder wet, I would have out my pistols and shoot that greasy cap of liberty and flaunting rag from the boughs."

"There was the dancing-green," observed the groom, pointing to the trodden grass.

"The people are possessed—perfectly mad," cried the nobleman. "Dancing and rejoicing to-day, and to-morrow the wind tears the hat and flag from the tree, and they come to the gallows themselves, instead of their black doll. Be quiet, good horse—be quiet! the hailstones frighten the beasts. Open the cloak-case, Gerritt, and give the young Baron a horse-cloth."

"Directly, my lord. But would it not be better to turn in here till the squall is over? Saint Florian! only look at the lumps of ice in your horse's mane. They are as large as a pigeon's egg: two horses are standing already under Quatgelat's shed, and his beer is not a bad tap."

The Baron looked inquiringly at his son.


"Yes, let us go in," said the lad; "we shall get to the Hague soon enough. Look how Balthasar is trembling, poor beast. Henrika declared he had been whitewashed, but if she could see how well his colour stands in this weather she would withdraw the accusation."

The Baron van Wibisma turned his streaming and steaming horse, frightened as it was by the storm, towards the inn, and in a few minutes he and his son stepped across the threshold of the tavern.

CHAPTER VI.

A GUST of warm air, reeking of beer and victuals, met the travellers as they entered the large, low, public room of the inn. It was sparely lighted by small windows on two sides, which hardly deserved to be called anything but port-holes, and the room itself looked like the cabin of a ship. The ceiling and the floor, the table and the benches, were all of the same dingy brown wood as the walls, into which bed-places were built like berths.

The host had hurried forward, with a profusion of bows, to meet his distinguished guests, and had led them to the hearth-place, where a pile of turfs was burning. The glow of the fuel served many purposes at once : it warmed the air, lighted up part of the room, which, in this gloomy weather, was almost dark ; and had a favourable influence on the carcasses of three fowls which were beginning to brown invitingly on a spit. As the newcomers went towards the fire, the old woman who was turning the spit pushed a large white cat out of her lap, and stood up. The host took some clothes off the backs of two settles, where they were hanging to dry, and threw them on to a bench, putting in their place the dripping cloaks of the Baron and his son ; and then, while the elder Wibisma



ordered some hot liquor for himself and his people, Nicolas brought the negro to the fire.

The shivering wretch squatted down on the hearth among the ashes, holding first his feet, in their soaking red morocco shoes, and then his numbed hands, to the warmth.

The father and son seated themselves at a table, which a serving-girl spread with a cloth. The host was servilely polite,—a stunted specimen, marked by the small-pox, whose dress displayed throughout the same brown hue as the woodwork of his inn-room. The Baron felt greatly inclined to call him to account for the decoration of the tree outside, but he did not do it, for at another table some little way off sat two citizens of Leyden, one of whom was well known to him, and he did not like the idea of being drawn into conversation in such a place as this.

When Nicolas too had glanced round the room, he gently pushed his father, and said in a whisper :

“Do you see those two men over there? The younger—he is just lifting the lid of the tankard—is the organist who rescued me from the boys yesterday, and lent me his cloak.”

“That man?” said the father; “he is a handsome young fellow. He might be taken for a painter, or such-like. Hi, host! Who is the gentleman with brown hair and fine eyes who is talking to the fencing-master Allertssohn?”

“That is Master Wilhelm, by your lordship’s leave, the youngest son of the old receiver-general, Cornelius; he is a player—a musician, as they call them.”

“Indeed, is he?” cried the Baron. “His father was one of my oldest friends in Leyden. He was a worthy and excellent man before this mania for freedom had turned all the people’s heads. And he too has a face that

it does one good to look at. There is a sort of purity in it—something—it is hard to say what. Do not you think, Nico, that he is like our picture of Saint Sebastian? Shall I speak to him, and thank him for his kindness?"

The Baron did not wait for his son's answer, though he always treated him as his friend and equal, but rose from his seat to give expression to his kindly impulse towards the musician; but an unexpected hindrance prevented his carrying out his good intentions. The man whom the Baron had identified as the fencing-master, Allertssohn, had suddenly become aware that the "Glippers'" cloaks were hanging by the fire, while his own and his friend's had been tossed aside on a bench. This circumstance was a serious grievance to the citizen; and just as the Baron rose, he pushed his chair angrily from the table, and threw back his long body as far as he could, resting his arm on the corner of the table opposite to him. Then turning his fierce, martial face from the host to the Baron, and from the Baron to the host again, he roared out at the top of his voice:

"Peter Quatgelat—here, you—how dare you! What do you mean, you rascally, sneaking time-server? Who gave you leave to throw our cloaks into a corner?"

"Yours, Captain," stammered the host, "were quite —"

"Hold your tongue, you shuffler," thundered the other in a tremendous voice, so excited that his long gray moustache and thick flowing beard trembled and waved as he spoke—"Hold your tongue! I know better. Heaven above us! A nobleman's cloak is to be bowed down to and made way for; and they are Spanish cloaks—most becoming to a Glipper, no doubt. And good Dutch cloth is tossed into the corner. Aha, friend, I will make an example of you!"

"I entreat you, most worshipful Captain——"

"A murrain on your worshipfuls, you good-for-nothing knave! First come, first served—that is the rule in Holland, and has been ever since the days of Adam and Eve. Hark to me, Master turncoat; if my most worshipful cloak, and Master Wilhelm's here, are not put back again before I can count twenty, you will see something you will not like. One—two—three——"

The innkeeper cast a terrified and imploring glance at the Baron, who shrugged his shoulders, and said with emphasis:

"Surely there must be room for more than two cloaks at the fire." So Quatgelat took the citizens' over-wraps from the bench, and hung them up over two chairs which he drew to the hearth. While this was doing the soldier slowly went on counting. By the time he had got to twenty the host had finished his task, but the angry Captain would not let him rest.

"Now, bring our reckoning, man," he said. "Wind and rain are not good company, but I know some that is worse. There is room and to spare for four cloaks by the fire, and in Holland for all the beasts in Noah's Ark, but not for Spaniards and their hangers-on. Devil take it! all my gall has risen. Come with me, Master Wilhelm, and let us be off, or mischief will come of it."

And as he spoke the last words, the soldier's prominent eyes—which even on ordinary occasions were wont to look as keenly on the world as though there were always something he was bound to look after—were fixed on the Baron's face with a vindictive stare.

Wibisma made as though he had not heard the provocation offered, and, as the fencing-master was quitting the room, he went with stately demeanour straight up to the

musician, bowed to him courteously, and thanked him for the friendly assistance he had the day before rendered his son.

"You are under no obligation to me whatever," replied Wilhelm Corneliussohn; "I helped the young Baron because it looks ugly when a number fall upon one alone."

"Allow me at least to applaud your sentiments," answered the Baron.

"Sentiments!" repeated the organist, with a meaning smile, and he drew a few notes on the table with his finger. The Baron watched his finger for a moment in silence. Then he went closer to the young man and said:

"Must everything, every trifling action, be referred to political questions and views?"

"Yes," replied Wilhelm firmly, and looking up quickly at the older man. "In these times yes, and a thousand times yes. You were not wise, Baron Matenesse, to speak to me of sentiments."

"Every man," said Wibisma with a shrug, "has a right to his own views, but he ought at any rate to respect those of other thoughtful men."

"No, my lord," interrupted the musician eagerly. "In these days there can be but one sentiment for us all; and if there be a man of Dutch blood who does not feel as we do, I wish to have neither lot nor part with him—not so much as to drink at the same table. Excuse me, my lord; my travelling companion is hot-blooded and impatient, as you have unfortunately seen, and does not like to be kept waiting."

Wilhelm bowed slightly, waved his hand to Nicolas, went up to the hearth-place, where he took his own and his comrade's half-dried cloaks on his arm, tossed a gold piece on to the table, took up a cage with a cover over

it, in which some birds were fluttering, and quitted the room.

The Baron looked after him, but said nothing. The young fellow's words and abrupt leave-taking filled his mind with painful reflections. He believed that he wished for what was right, and yet at this moment he was overwhelmed with a sense of some stain or flaw in the cause he supported. It is more endurable to be persecuted than to be shunned, and an expression of intense vexation marked the Baron's affable features as he rejoined his son.

Nicolas had not lost a word of the organ-player's speech, and the blood had faded from his fresh young face as he could not help gathering from it that this man, whose whole appearance had particularly attracted his boyish affections, turned his back on his father as a dishonourable renegade whom men would fain avoid. The words with which Janus Dousa had dismissed him the day before recurred vividly to his mind, and when the Baron had returned to his seat opposite to him, the boy raised his eyes to his father's face and said timidly, but in a voice of touching earnestness and sincere anxiety :

"Father, what is it? Father, are they so very wrong when they would rather be Dutch than Spanish?"

Wibisma looked at his son with astonishment and disapproval; and as he felt his own confidence shaken—though but for an instant—and as a blustering speech often does good service when conviction or inclination is lacking for argument, he broke out more furiously than he had done for years in speaking to his son, now fast approaching man's estate :

"And are you beginning too to sniff at the bait with which Orange catches fools? If I hear such another word from your lips I will teach you how conceited boys should

be treated. Here, host ; what is the meaning of all that tomfoolery on the tree yonder ? ”

“ It was the people, my lord, the simple fools from Leyden—not I, your grace. They are guilty of that piece of lawless mischief. When the soldiers came out who had been shut up in the town during the siege, they tricked out the tree in that disgraceful fashion. I am only the tenant here, put in by the old Seigneur van der Does, and it is no business of mine to have an opinion ; but a man must live, though as sure as I hope to die saved, I am for King Philip for ever.”

“ Until the Leyden men come for another day’s outing,” retorted Wibisma bitterly. “ And did you keep this house open during the siege ? ”

“ Yes, my lord ; and their graces the Spanish had no cause to complain of me ; and if a poor man’s services are not beneath your grace’s notice, I am your lordship’s to command.”

“ Very good—very good,” murmured the Baron, looking keenly at the stunted ugliness of his host, whose little eyes twinkled with a wily glance. Then turning to Nicolas he said :

“ Go and look at the thrushes in the window, my son ; I want to speak to this man.”

The young Baron rose, and while he, instead of looking at the birds, gazed after the two enthusiasts for the freedom of their country, who by this time were riding along the road towards Delft, the image of fetters again recurred to his memory—the fetters that drag a man down ; and in his mind’s eye he saw the glitter of the golden chain which King Philip had sent to his father. Involuntarily Nicolas turned round to look at him ; there he stood, whispering with the innkeeper—nay, he even laid his hand on the

man's shoulder. Was it honest of him to be so familiar with a man whom in the bottom of his heart he must hold in utter contempt? Or was he indeed—and the lad shuddered, for the name “traitor” flashed into his mind which a boy had shouted in his ear in the course of the scuffle by the church.

When the rain had moderated the travellers left the tavern. The Baron allowed the squalid host to kiss his hand as they left, but his son would not permit him to touch his. During the rest of the ride to the Hague but few words passed between the father and son.

The musician and his companion, as they rode to Delft, were less silent. Wilhelm had explained to the Captain, modestly, as became him, being the younger, that he had expressed his hostile feeling towards the nobleman somewhat too vehemently.

“True, true—very true,” replied Allertssohn, whom his friends called Allerts for brevity; “very true! but hot blood, hot blood. You cannot guess, Master Wilhelm—but least said soonest mended.”

“Nay, nay—speak out, Master.”

“You will think none the better of me if I do.”

“Then let us talk of something else.”

“No, Wilhelm; I have really nothing to be ashamed of, for no one will take me for a milk-sop.”

Wilhelm laughed.

“You a milk-sop!” he exclaimed. “How many Spaniards, I wonder, have you cut down with that Brescia blade of yours?”

“Spitted, sir; I have spitted many more than I have killed, sir,” replied the other. “When the devil is in me do I stop to ask: ‘Foins sir, or a Spanish blade?’ And yet there is a man I am afraid of, my best and at the same

time my worst friend, a good Dutchman too, sir, as you are yourself—and he, you must know, is the man who rides here by your side. Ay, Master, when my blood begins to boil, when my beard begins to quiver, my small stock of sense flies right away, just as your pigeons do when you throw them up. You do not know me yet, Wilhelm.”

“Not yet, Master? Why, how many times then must I see you lead your men, or take a lesson from you in sword-play?”

“Right, left—I am as calm then as the water in that ditch; but if anything rubs me against the grit, if—how am I to make it plain to you in three words without a simile or comparison?”

“Speak on.”

“Well, then, for instance, when I see that cringing courtier received as if he were honour itself——”

“It stings you to the quick.”

“Stings me! Nay, it makes me as wild as a tiger, and I ought not to be—I know I ought not. By Roland, my former self!——”

“Master, Master, your beard is beginning to quiver again already.”

“And did the Glippers really suppose, sir, that their most illustrious cloaks——”

“The host took yours and mine away from the fire entirely of his own accord.”

“And so he might for aught I care; but the bandy-legged ape did it by way of honouring the Spanish time-servers. That put me out—that I could not brook.”

“Well, you certainly did not keep your annoyance to yourself, and the only wonder to me is that the Baron took your insults so patiently.”

“That was it—that was just it!” exclaimed the fencing-

master, and his beard began to wag ominously. "It was that which drove me out of the tavern; it was that which made me run away from myself. That—that—by Roland, my former self!——"

"I do not understand you, Master."

"No?—well, to be sure, how should you? but I will explain. Look here, young man, by the time you are as old as I am you will have learned something too. There are very few sound trees in a wood, very few horses without a vice, very few swords without a flaw, and hardly a single man past forty who does not carry a serpent in his heart. Some nibble gently; others torture us with a venomous tooth; mine—would you like now just to peep in here?" And as he spoke the soldier struck his broad breast, and without waiting for his comrade's answer, went on:

"You know me, Master Wilhelm, and my way of life. What do I do, what is my business? Is it one that does not become a soldier and a gentleman?—I live by my sword. Do you know a stouter blade or a surer hand than these? Do not my men obey me? Have I ever grudged risking my life in battle under the red walls and towers we have left behind us? No, by Roland, my former self! no; a thousand times no."

"Who contradicts you, Master Allerts? But tell me what you mean by your phrase of 'Roland, my former self.'"

"Another time, Wilhelm; do not interrupt me now. Listen while I tell you where it is my serpent bites. Well, then, once more, what I do is the work of a soldier and a gentleman; and yet when a fellow like this Wibisma, who learnt of my father how to use his sword, comes across my path and stirs my bile, if I were to make so bold as to challenge him, as I have a perfect right to do, what would

he do? He would laugh and ask, 'What is the price of the course, Master Allerts? and have you real sharp rapiers?' Or perhaps he would say nothing, and how he would then behave we have just seen. His eye seemed to wriggle over my head like an eel, and his ears to be stopped with wax. It was all the same to him whether I abused him or a cur barked at him. If a Renneberg or a Brederode had stood in my shoes, how Wibisma's sword would have flown from its sheath—for he knows how to fight, and is no coward—but as for me! Well, no one likes to take a slap in the face, but as surely as my father was a brave man, the coarsest insult is easier to bear than the sense of being held as too mean even to have an insult offered. I tell you, Wilhelm, as the Glipper went past me——"

"Your beard began to wag."

"It is all very well to laugh; you do not know."

"Yes, yes, I do, Master Allerts; I understand you perfectly."

"Then you understand why I brought myself and my sword out into the open air so hastily?"

"Perfectly. But stop a minute, please—my pigeons are fluttering and flapping so distressfully. They want air."

The soldier drew up, and while Wilhelm took the dripping wrapper off the cage which he held between himself and the horse's neck, he asked him:

"How can a man be bothered with those fond, silly creatures? If you want to shorten your hours in the Musical Muse's service by playing with birds, train some falcons; that is a knightly pastime, and I can teach you the art."

"Leave my pigeons in peace," said Wilhelm. "They

are not so meek as folks think, and in many a war—which is certainly a knightly pastime—they have done good service. Remember Haarlem. There, it is beginning to pour again. If my cloak were not so short I might cover the pigeons with it."

"You certainly do look like Goliath in David's clothes."

"It is my school-cloak. I lent the other yesterday to cover young Wibisma's shoulders."

"That Spanish upstart?"

"I told you before about the squabble among the boys."

"To be sure. And that monkey has kept your cloak?"

"You brought me away and would not wait. They sent it back, no doubt, shortly after we had started."

"And their graces expected thanks for the favour he had done you in accepting it."

"No, no. The Baron spoke gratefully."

"But that does not make your cape any longer. Here, take my cloak, Wilhelm. I have no pigeons to cover, and my skin is tougher than yours."

CHAPTER VII.

THIS first wet day was followed by a second and a third. White mist and gray cloud hung over the meadows, while the cold, damp, north-west wind packed the clouds and darkened the day. Little brooks ran through the streets of Leyden from the rain-spouts that drained the steep roofs; the water in the canals and ditches was thick and turbid, and swelled almost to their margins. Dripping and shivering men and women hurried past each other without a word of greeting; and the pair of storks cowered closer together on their nest, and dreamed of the warm south, regretting their over-early return to the cold, damp flats of Holland.

A dread of what lay before them was growing daily in anxious minds. The rain which made the young grass sprout in the fields brought fears which also grew apace in the hearts of the burghers of Leyden. In many a tap-room parleys were held, which were anything rather than hopeful; while in others resistance was blamed as folly, or the decline of the cause of the Prince and of freedom was loudly proclaimed and invoked.

A man might wish to see a cheerful face in Leyden, and look long for it in vain; and the last place where he would be likely to find it would be in the house of the

Burgomaster Van der Werff. Three days had passed since the master's departure—nay, it was nearly the middle of the fourth—and he had not returned home, nor had a word of explanation or of greeting from him reached his family. Dame Maria had put on her light-blue stuff gown with the Mechlin lace trimming round the square-cut neck, for it was a dress her husband liked to see her in, and to-day surely he must return. The sprig of wall-flower in her bosom she had cut from a blossoming shrub in her window, and Barbara had helped her to plait her long thick hair. It still wanted an hour of noon when the young woman went into the Burgomaster's study, with a white duster in her hand; there she at first took her stand by the window, where the streaming rain trickled down the glass in a variety of serpentine lines, and, pressing her forehead against a pane, she looked down into the deserted street. Water lay in pools between the smooth red tiles of the pavement. A porter clattered by in heavy wooden shoes; a maidservant hurried across, her head wrapped up in her kerchief; a shoemaker's boy, with a pair of high boots slung over his shoulder, sprang from puddle to puddle, carefully avoiding the dry spots—no horseman was to be seen. The silence in the house and street was almost uncanny; nothing was to be heard but the rush and patter of the rain.— Maria could not hope to see her husband before she heard his horse's hoofs, so she did not try to look into the distance; she only stood dreaming, seeing the street, and hearing the unceasing rain.

The room had been duly warmed, ready for her husband's return, for she expected that he would arrive drenched through; but a sharp draught met Maria through the fittings of the window-panes. She shivered, and as she went back again into the half-dark room she felt as though all the days

to come must remain in twilight, as though a bright day could never dawn again.

Some minutes slipped by before she remembered what it was that she had come into the room for. She began by passing the duster over the desk, the piles of papers, and the other articles in the room ; and at last she came to the pistols, which Peter had not taken with him on his journey. Above the weapons, at some considerable height, hung the portrait of her husband's first wife. This needed the cleansing hand of the housewife much more urgently than the furniture, for Maria had always been shy of touching it. But to-day she took courage, placed herself in front of it, and gazed steadfastly at the youthful features of the woman with whom Peter had been happy. She felt spell-bound, as it were, by the hazel eyes that looked upon her from the gentle face. Yes, that woman looked happy, almost arrogantly happy. How many more privileges must Peter have allowed his former wife than he did her !

The thought cut her to the heart, and without uttering a word, she addressed a whole series of questions to the silent image which looked down from its frame, more bright and confident, as it seemed, even as she gazed. Suddenly she fancied that the rosy lips of the picture had moved, that its eyes turned ; a cold chill ran through her blood ; she began to feel scared, and yet she could not tear herself from the spot. She fixed her eyes on it with a wide stare ; she could not move, and her breath came quickly. Then, as she looked, her sight grew keener. Surely a shadow lay on the brow of the lost Eva. Had the painter meant to give her the expression of a grief weighing upon her, or was it only dust that had clouded the clear brow ?

She drew a chair towards the picture, and set her foot on the seat ; as she did so her skirt slipped up. With a

blush, as if other eyes than those painted ones could see her, she hastily pulled her dress down over her white stocking, and quickly mounted the chair.

Maria now stood face to face with the portrait. Her trembling hand passed the dusting-cloth over Eva's brow, and wiped the shadow from the rosy face; then she brushed the dust from the frame and background, and read the signature of the painter whose hand had wrought the likeness. "Artjen van Leyden" was his name, and his painstaking brush had recorded the smallest detail with careful exactitude. The silver chain with turquoises that decked the round throat of her predecessor she knew well. Peter had given it to herself before their marriage, and she had worn it on her wedding-day; but a little cross set with diamonds which hung from its centre she had never seen. The gold buckle of Eva's waistband had been her own since her last birthday, but it was much bent, and its blunted points could hardly be pushed through the stiff material of her belt.

"She had it all when it was new!" she said to herself. "But as for the trinkets—what do I care for them? It is his heart—his heart! How much love is there left for me in Peter's heart?"

It was quite involuntary, but the question seemed to sound again and again in her inmost soul, and she had to make a great effort not to cry.

"If only he would come—why does he not come?" she cried aloud in her anguish of mind.

At this juncture the door opened, but without her observing it. Barbara came into the room, and spoke her name in a low tone of mild reproach. Maria started and blushed.

"Give me your hand," she said; "I want to get down.

I have done now. The dust—it really was a shame !”
When she was safe on the floor again the widow said :

“How red your cheeks are ! listen, my dear sister—
listen to me, child——”

But Barbara’s little sermon was interrupted at this point, for the knocker fell heavily on the front door, and Maria sprang to the window. The widow followed her, and, hastily looking out, exclaimed :

“It is Wilhelm Corneliussohn the musician. He has been to Delft,—I heard that from his mother,—and very likely he has news of Peter. I will send him up to you, but first I will hear downstairs what news he has brought ; then, if you want me, you will find me in Liesje’s room. She is very hot and her eyes ache ; she is sickening for some rash or fever, I think.”

Barbara left the room, and Maria held her hands to her burning cheeks and walked slowly up and down the room, till she heard a tap at the door, and the organist came in. After a brief welcome the young woman asked eagerly :

“And you saw my husband in Delft ?”

“I did, Dame,” replied Wilhelm, “the evening before last.”

“Tell me, then——”

“Directly, in a minute. I have a whole budget of messages for you. First from your mother.”

“She is well ?”

“Very well and cheerful. And the worthy Doctor Groot, too, is brisk on his feet.”

“And my husband ?”

“I found him at the Doctor’s. Doctor Groot sends you his best and warmest greetings and good wishes. Yesterday and the day before we had music at his house.

He always has the newest thing from Italy, and if we had those motetts——”

“Keep that till afterwards, Master Wilhelm. Tell me first what my husband——”

“The Burgomaster had come to the Doctor with a message from the Prince. He was in a great hurry and could only wait for the beginning of the singing—but it went capitally. Do not be uneasy as to the pitch and clef. If you with your glorious voice——”

“Oh, pray, Master Wilhelm——”

“Nay, my dear lady, you must not refuse. Doctor Groot was saying that as a girl in Delft you had a matchless treble voice ; and if you, and the noble Lady of Nordwyk, and Master van Aken’s eldest daughter——”

“But, dear Master Wilhelm,” cried the young woman with growing impatience, “I do not want to hear anything at present about motetts and pitch and clef, but what you can tell me of my husband.”

Wilhelm gazed half astonished and half vexed at the young wife. Then tossing his head with a laugh at his own clumsiness, he said with good-humoured penitence :

“Forgive me, I beg—it is always so ; trifles seem overwhelmingly important when our head is full of them. A word about your husband, now he is away, must, of course, sound sweeter in your ears than all my music. I ought to have thought of that before. Well, the Burgomaster is very well, and has settled much business with the Prince. Before starting for Dortrecht yesterday morning he gave me a few lines for you, and desired me to deliver them into your hand with his loving greeting.” As he spoke the musician handed a note to Maria ; she took it eagerly, and then she said :

“No offence, Master Wilhelm ; we can discuss your

motetts to-morrow, or whenever you like ; but to-day —”

“To-day you must devote your time to that letter,” interrupted Wilhelm. “That is only natural. The messenger has fulfilled his errand, and the musician will try his luck with you another time.”

As soon as the young man had left, Maria went to her own room, seated herself close to the window, tore open the letter from her husband, and read as follows :

“My very dear and faithful wife—

“Master Wilhelm Corneliussohn, of Leyden, will carry this letter to you. I am well, but I was ill pleased to leave you on our wedding-day. The weather is very bad. I found the Prince in great trouble, but we do not give up hope ; and if the Almighty protects us, and every man does his duty, all may yet be well. To-day I must ride to Dortrecht. The business I have to do there is most important. Take patience, for it may yet be several days before I can return.

“If the messenger comes from the council for them, give him the papers which lie on the right hand side of the desk, under the leaden weight. Give my love to Barbara and the children. If you lack money, ask the secretary Van Hout, in my name, for the rest of my dues—he knows about it. If you feel lonely, go to see his wife or the Dame van der Does ; they will be pleased to see you. Buy up flour and butter, and cheese and smoked meat, as much as you can procure. There is no knowing what may happen. Let Barbara counsel you.

“In confident expectation of your dutiful obedience,

“Your faithful husband,

“PETER ADRIANSSOHN VAN DER WERFF.”

Maria read this letter first hastily, and then a second time slowly, line by line, to the end. Disappointed, saddened, and wounded, she folded it up, and then—she herself knew not why—she pulled the sprig of wall-flower out of the front of her gown and tossed it into the turf-box by the hearth. Then she opened her clothes chest, and took out of it a neatly-carved casket, placed it on the table, and carefully laid her husband's letter in it.

Long after it had found its place with the other papers, Maria was still standing in front of the open box and looking meditatively at its contents. At last she put her hand on the lid to shut it down; but she paused and took up a packet of letters which lay at the bottom of the coffer, under a few gold and silver christening coins, some modest trinkets, and a withered rose. Then drawing a seat up to the table she sat down and began to read them. She was well acquainted with these letters; they had been addressed by a fine, promising young man to her sister, his betrothed. They were dated from Jena, whither he had gone to pursue his studies in jurisprudence. Every word breathed the eager longing of a lover; passion had fired every line, as it had filled the soul of the writer; and in many passages the young lover's prose rose to a lofty flight of eloquence. It was as a student under Doctor Groot at Delft that he had wooed and won his promised bride when she had scarcely passed the age of childhood.

While she read, Jacoba's sweet face and her lover's handsome and poetic features rose before Maria's fancy. She remembered their happy wedding and her brother-in-law's jovial friend—a man richly endowed with every gift of nature, who, to do duty as his best man, had come with him to Holland, and who at his departure had given her the rose which lay there in the casket. No other voice had

ever sounded so well with hers as his had done ; from no other lips had she ever heard such poetic and graceful speech as from his ; eyes so bright and deep as those of the young Thuringian Baron had never looked into her own.

After the wedding Georg von Dornburg had returned home, and the young couple had gone to live at Haarlem. Nothing more had ever been heard of the stranger, and both her sister and her brother-in-law had ere long been silenced for ever. Like most of the inhabitants of Haarlem, they had met their death at the hands of the Spanish butchers when that heroic but hapless city fell. Nothing remained to Maria of the sister she had loved but her faithful remembrance, and those letters from her lover which she now held in her hand.

These indeed spoke of love—that real and exalted love which speaks with the tongues of angels, and can remove mountains.

There lay her husband's letter, a wretched production. She could not bear to open it again as she laid the dear memorials back in the box ; and yet her heart swelled as she thought of Peter. She felt that she loved him, and that his faithful heart was her own. Only she was not satisfied, she was not happy ; for he had no feeling for her but passionate tenderness, or fatherly kindness, and she wanted another love than this. The young wife who had been the disciple, nay, the friend, of the illustrious Grotius, and who had grown up in the society of distinguished and cultivated men—herself an enthusiastic patriot—felt that she could be more, far more, to her husband than he wished or asked. She had never looked for romantic sentiment or high-flown eloquence from a man so grave, so sternly practical, but only that he should understand all the high and noble impulses that

stirred within her, that she should be allowed to share his efforts, and be the partner of his thoughts and feelings. And that none of this existed for her she had learned once more from the meagre letter she had just received.

He had been a faithful and trusted friend of her father who was now dead, and her brother-in-law too had attached himself with all the enthusiasm of youth to Van der Werff, the older and maturer champion of their country's freedom. Whenever he had spoken of Peter to Maria, it had always been with expressions of the warmest admiration and affection. It was soon after her father's death, and the terrible end of the young married couple, that Peter had come to Delft ; and when he spoke of his sympathy, and offered consolation, he did so with such fervent and earnest speech as seemed a saving anchor of hope to her storm-tossed heart. The brave Leydener came again and again to Delft, and was always a guest at Groot's house. When the men sat there in council or discourse, it was Maria's part to fill their glasses and listen to their talk. This was on many subjects, and would often seem to her neither clear nor wise ; but what Van der Werff said was always full of sense, and a child could understand his simple and emphatic language. To her he seemed like a stalwart oak among feeble willows. She knew, too, of his many expeditions, carried out at the peril of his life, in the service of the Prince and of his country's liberties, and she awaited the issue with a beating heart.

More than once she had thought how noble a lot it would be to be borne through life on the strong arm of this resolute man ; and when he put out that arm for her to take she obeyed his wish, as proud and as happy as a vassal summoned by his king to be dubbed knight. And now, as she sat thinking of that bygone time, how vividly she

remembered each hope that had filled her soul when she had come home with him to Leyden !

Her husband had promised her, not indeed a May moon, but a happy summer and autumn by his side ; and now she recalled this figure of speech. How many things, altogether different from what she had expected, had hindered their perfect union even till this very day ! Storm, unrest, and strife, an eternal round of toil and exhaustion, that was his life—that was the life for which he had invited her to his side without showing even a wish that she should take any share in his labours and anxieties. It could not, it should not, go on so ; everything that she had thought fair and lovable in her early home had here come to nothing. Music and poetry, which there had cheered her spirit—subtle discourse, which there had developed her mind, did not exist here. Barbara's friendly soul could never fill the place of these lost joys ; she had given them all up for the full and perfect love of her husband, but how far had that love taken their place ?

It was with bitter feelings that she put the casket back into the chest, and obeyed the summons to dinner. She found Adrian alone at the long table with the servants, for Barbara was sitting with Liesje.

She had never felt so deserted, so forlorn, so useless, as at this moment. What good was she doing here ? Barbara ruled in kitchen and cellar, and she—she only stood in the way of her husband's duties to the city and state.

Thus she sat thinking, when she again heard the front-door knocker. She went to the window and saw that it was the doctor ; Liesje was worse, then, and she had not even asked after her.

" Ah ! " she said to herself, " the children ! " Her face lost its indifferent look, and daylight seemed to fall upon

her soul. "I promised Peter to care for them as if they were my own, and I will carry out what I have undertaken."

With happy resolve she went to the child's sick-room, hastily closing the door behind her. Doctor Bontius looked round at her with a warning glance, and Barbara said :

"Gently, gently ; the child is sleeping a little."

Maria went up to the bed-side, but the doctor asked her :

"Have you ever had the scarlet fever ? "

"No."

"Then you must not come into the room again. Where Dame Barbara is nurse, nothing more can be needed."

The young stepmother went out of the room ; her heart was heavy—heavy beyond words. She felt like a stranger in her husband's house. She longed to be out in the open air, and as she threw her kerchief over her head and went downstairs, the smell of the leather, which stood in bales in the wide hall on the ground-floor,—a smell she had hardly perceived before,—seemed quite unbearable. She longed for her mother, and wished herself back among her friends at Delft, and in her own quiet, airy home there. For the first time in her life she owned herself unhappy ; and while with downcast eyes she made her way through the streets against the wind, she struggled in vain against a mysterious and sinister power which seemed to compel her to recall every incident and detail that had cheated her hopes.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN the musician left the Burgomaster's house he went to that of the aunt of the young Baron Matenesse van Wibisma, to fetch his cloak, which had not yet been returned to him. He was not wont to care very much about his outer man, but yet he was not sorry that the rain kept the townsfolk within doors, for the cloak he wore, and which he had completely outgrown, looked anything rather than handsome. And his appearance altogether must have been the reverse of prosperous, for, when he entered the lofty and spacious hall of old Mistress van Hoogstraten's house, Belotti, her steward, received him as coldly as though he were come to crave an alms. However, the old Neapolitan—in whose mouth the sturdy Dutch language sounded like the spasmodic gasping of a singer with a cold—soon changed his note when Wilhelm calmly explained to him in good Italian the object of his coming. Indeed, at the soft sounds of his mother-tongue, the old servant's repellent manner was subdued to one of benevolent and eager welcome. He began to talk to Wilhelm of his native land, but the musician answered shortly, and repeated his request that he would find and restore his cloak. Belotti then politely showed him into a small room on one side of the large entrance hall, relieved

him of the cloak he wore, and went upstairs. Minute after minute passed ; at length fully a quarter of an hour. At last, as neither the steward nor the cloak reappeared, the young man lost patience, which was not his wont, and the panes of the lead-latticed window on which he drummed as he waited were in some peril of being broken, when at length the door opened. Wilhelm heard it, and drummed all the harder to intimate to the Italian his impatience at such long delay. But he hastily snatched his hand down from the glass, for a musical young voice said behind him in very good Dutch :

"Have you finished your battle-march, sir? Belotti is bringing your cloak."

Wilhelm turned round, and stood bewildered and speechless, looking in the face of the noble damsel who had come close up to him. Her features were not unknown to him, and yet—not even a goddess can wax younger with years, and the daughters of men grow taller, if anything, and not shorter; while the lady whom he could have believed he now saw before him, whom he had known intimately in Rome, and whom he could never again forget, had been older and taller than this young girl who so strangely resembled her, and who seemed to be but ill pleased at the young man's astonished but searching gaze. She beckoned the steward with a haughty gesture, and said in Italian :

"Give this gentleman his cloak, and explain to him that I only came down to apologise for your forgetfulness."

As she spoke Henrika van Hoogstraten turned towards the door; but Wilhelm followed her with two hasty strides, exclaiming:

"Not at all—not at all, noble lady. It is I who ought

to offer excuses. But if ever you yourself were startled by a likeness——”

“Only common folks are all alike!” cried the girl, with a haughty gesture of dismissal.

“Indeed, madam; and yet——”

“Enough of that,” interrupted Henrika, with so much annoyance that the musician looked at her in astonishment. “One sheep is exactly like another, and out of every hundred peasants twenty have the same features. All cheap articles are cast in a mould.” As soon as Wilhelm heard her descend to argument, he recovered his usual calm demeanour, and answered politely:

“And yet nature makes some of her loveliest works in pairs;—the eyes, for instance, in the Madonna’s face.”

“You are a Catholic?”

“A Calvinist, madam.”

“And devoted to the Prince’s cause?”

“Say rather to the cause of freedom.”

“Hence that battle-song drummed on the window-pane?”

“It began by being a simple gavotte, but my impatience quickened the measure. I am a musician, Madam.”

“But a bad drummer, I should judge. I pity the parchment!”

“Well, a drum is an instrument like any other, and when we play, be it what it may, we try to give utterance to what we feel.”

“Then allow me to thank you for not having actually broken the window.”

“That, madam, would have had no beauty to redeem it; and art is at an end when beauty is lost.”

“And do you consider that song which was in your

cloak-pocket—it fell out and Nico picked it up—do you consider that as beautiful, or the contrary?”

“This one, do you mean? or the other?”

“I mean the song of the Gueux.”

“It is wild, but it is no more unlovely than the raging of the storm.”

“It is horrible, brutal, and revolting!”

“I should call it rugged, but delightfully vigorous.”

“And this other piece?”

“You must excuse me from judging, since I composed it myself. Can you read music, madam?”

“A little.”

“And did my humble work displease you, then?”

“By no means; but I find certain very doleful passages in this chorale, as in all the Calvinist hymns.”

“That depends on how it is performed.”

“They are all adapted to the voices of the tradesmen’s wives and washerwomen in your meeting-houses.”

“Every hymn, if it is truly felt, can lend wings to the souls of simple folk; and the cry which goes up to Heaven from the lowest depths of the heart cannot surely be displeasing to the God to whom it is addressed. And then——”

“Well?”

“If these notes are worthy to live, it may even happen that such a choir as we have never heard——”

“Will sing them in your presence, do you mean?”

“No, madam; this music will have fulfilled its destiny if it ever should be fairly well sung at all. I should be glad to be present, no doubt; but if only it is performed, that is what I chiefly care for.”

“Your wishes are modest!”

“I have already had the greatest pleasure it can afford me, in composing it.”

Henrika glanced sympathetically at the speaker, and went on with a softer tone in her full round voice :

"I am sorry for you, Master. I like your composition—why should I deny it? It appeals to the heart in many passages; but how it will be disfigured and mutilated in your churches! Your heresy excludes all art; the works of the greatest painters are an abomination to you; and even music—that noble art which has blossomed and flourished here in the Netherlands—will, ere long, fare no better."

"I venture to believe the contrary."

"You are wrong, Master—you are wrong. For if your cause triumphs—which the Virgin forefend—there will soon be no buildings in all Holland but warehouses, workshops, and bare preaching-houses, from which all singing and organs will be banished."

"No, indeed, madam. The little town of Athens was never the home of the arts till after she had established her liberties by the war with the Persians."

"Athens and Leyden!" she retorted scornfully. "There are owls, to be sure, in the tower of Saint Pancras, but where is Minerva?"

As Henrika laughed rather than spoke these words, a shrill woman's voice called her for the third time by name. She broke off in the middle of her speech and said :

"Now, I must go,—but I shall keep this music."

"You will honour me by accepting it, and if you would permit me to bring you some other pieces——"

"Henrika!" sounded again down the stairs, and the young lady hastily replied :

"Give anything you like to Belotti; it will be safe. But let it be soon, for I shall not remain here long."

Wilhelm looked after Henrika, whose movements, as she went across the wide hall and up the stairs, were no

less swift and decided than her speech had been; and again he could not help being vividly reminded of his friend in Rome. The old Italian had also watched her as she went, and when she had disappeared round the turning of the broad staircase he shrugged his shoulders, turned to the organist, and said in a voice of genuine anxiety :

"There is something wrong with my young lady. There is always a storm brewing ; she is always like a pistol, ready to go off, and then she has a dreadful headache ! It was different when she first came."

"Is the young lady ill?"

"My mistress will not believe it," replied the steward ; "but the waiting-maid and I—we see what we see. First red, then pale ; no sleep at night ; and for dinner just a chicken's wing and a scrap of salad."

"And does the doctor think as badly of it as you do?"

"The doctor ! Doctor Fleuriel is no longer here. When the Spaniards marched in he removed to Ghent, and since that my mistress will have no one near her but the barber who comes to bleed her. All the doctors are followers of the Prince of Orange, and are heretics one and all. There, she is calling again. I will send the other cloak home for you ; and if at any time you have a fancy to talk Italian you have only to knock at the door. That perpetual calling ! My young lady suffers under that too."

When Wilhelm got out into the street it was raining but very little ; the clouds were breaking, and from a patch of blue sky the sun was shining, bright and hot, down upon the Nobel Straat, while a rainbow bent promisingly over the roofs ; but the musician had no eyes for the pleasing prospect. The bright sheen on the wet streets gave him no pleasure. All that surrounded him looked strange and changed. A beautiful image had long been cherished in

the inmost sanctuary of his memory—an image which he had only allowed his retrospective gaze to contemplate in rare and solemn moments ; and now another was forcing its way into that holy of holies. His precious diamond was in danger of being exchanged for a stone of which he did not know the value. The old pure harmony was interrupted by another in a similar and yet a different key. How, henceforth, could he think of Isabella without remembering Henrika ? Still, at any rate, he had not heard Henrika sing—the memory of Isabella's tones remained untroubled. He blamed himself for having obeyed an impulse of vanity in promising to send the haughty girl—a Spaniard, too, at heart—his newest songs. He had boldly defied the Baron Matenesse van Wibisma on the ground of political feeling ; but he could pay court to this girl who mocked at what he held dear, simply because she was a woman, and because it was sweet to hear his works praised by sweet lips. “Hercules throwing away his club and sitting down to spin at Omphale's nod. Esther, and the daughter of Herodias,” Wilhelm muttered angrily. He was deeply dissatisfied with himself, and went straight home and up to his quiet attic chamber, close to the pigeon-house.

“Something has happened to vex him at Delft,” thought his father.

“Why could he not fancy the broiled fish to-day ?” asked his mother as they sat together at dinner. Both perceived that something was weighing on him—the pride and darling of their house ; but they did not trouble themselves to inquire why and wherefore, for they were accustomed to the moods which sometimes possessed him for half a day at a time.

After Wilhelm had fed his pigeons, he went back into

his room, which for a time he paced uneasily. Then he took up his violin and played, one after another, all the songs he had ever heard Isabella sing. His playing had seldom sounded at once so meltingly tender and so passionately wild ; and his mother, as she listened in the kitchen, turned her dough-mill faster and faster, and, sticking it into the stiff paste, said to herself as she wiped her hands on her apron :

“ How it cries and sings ! Well, if it is a comfort to him, in Heaven’s name let him do it ! But gut is dear, and he will want two new strings at least.”

In the evening Wilhelm had to go out to exercise with the corps of volunteers to which he belonged. His company was told off to keep watch at the Hoogewoerd Gate, and, as he marched thither, along Nobel Straat, he heard the deep pure tones of a lady’s voice singing, through the open windows of the Hoogstratens’ house. He listened eagerly, and noticing with a shudder how much Henrika’s voice—for it could be no one else singing—how wonderfully her voice resembled that of Isabella, he hastily commanded the drums to beat.

The next morning a servant of the Hoogstratens appeared, and gave Wilhelm a note, in which he was briefly requested to be in the Nobel Straat precisely at two in the afternoon, neither earlier nor later. He would not say yes, but he could not say no, and at the appointed hour he found himself at the spot. Henrika was ready to receive him in the little room on the ground floor. She looked graver than yesterday, and the deeper shadow under her eyes, and glowing crimson of her cheeks, reminded Wilhelm of Belotti’s anxiety as to her health. After returning his greeting, she went on at once, and rapidly :

“ I must speak with you—sit down. To be brief, and

to the point!—The way you spoke, the things you said yesterday, have stirred up some thoughts in my mind. It would seem that I am like some other woman, and that you met her in Italy. Perhaps you may be thinking of one who is nearly related to me, and of whom I have lost every trace. Answer me truly, for I am not asking out of idle curiosity. Where did you meet her?"

"At Lugano. We travelled with the same vetturino to Milan, and subsequently I met her again at Rome, and there I saw her every day for months."

"Then you knew her very well. Now, seeing me for the second time, does our resemblance still strike you so strongly?"

"It is quite extraordinary."

"Then I must have a double. Was she a native of this country?"

"She called herself an Italian, but she understood Dutch, for she would often turn over my books, and could follow the conversations between me and some young painters come from the Netherlands. I believed her to belong to some noble German house."

"An adventuress evidently. What was her name?"

"Isabella: but I must add that I do not think any one is justified in calling her an adventuress."

"Was she married?"

"There was something matronly in her dignified demeanour, but I never heard her speak of a husband. Her duenna, an old Italian lady, always called her Donna Isabella, but she can hardly have known anything more of her former life than I did."

"And that was good or bad?"

"Nothing at all, madam."

"And what was she doing in Rome?"

"She practised singing as an art, and excelled in it. She never ceased to study, and made great progress in Rome. It was my privilege to instruct her in counterpoint."

"And she sang in public?"

"Yes and no. A prelate of rank and a foreigner was her patron, and by his introduction all doors were open to her, including Palestrina's. Thus important parts were given to her in church music, and she did not shun singing in certain distinguished circles, but she never sang in public for money. That I know, for she never would allow any one but myself to play her accompaniments; she liked my playing, and so I gained admission to many noble houses."

"Was she rich?"

"No, Mistress. She had handsome clothes and some fine jewels, but she was obliged to live narrowly. From time to time money was sent to her from Florence, but the gold pieces soon slipped through her fingers, for though she lived quietly, and ate no more than a bird, while her frail health needed better nourishment, she was liberal to extravagance when she saw any poor artist in want; and she knew most of them, for, with me as her protector, she would often sit with them, at their wine."

"With painters and musicians?"

"With any real artists of lofty feeling. At times she outdid them all in effervescent brilliancy."

"At times?"

"Yes, only at times; for she had melancholy, crushingly sad hours and days; still, like an April day, she would have alternations of utter despair and of bubbling delight in existence."

"A strange creature! And do you know what became of her?"

"No, madam. One evening she received a letter from

Milan, which must have contained some bad news, and the next day she had vanished without taking leave of any one."

"And did you make no effort to follow her?"

Wilhelm coloured, and answered with some embarrassment :

"I had no right to do so ; and soon after she left I fell ill—sick unto death."

"Ah ! you loved her?"

"Madam, I must entreat you——"

"Yes, you loved her. And did she return your love?"

"Mistress van Hoogstraten, we are acquaintances of but one day's standing."

"Pray forgive me. But if you have any regard for my wishes we have not met for the last time ; though my double cannot, certainly, be the lady of whom I was thinking. Adieu till we meet again, soon. You hear how incessantly I am called ; there is no end to it. You have roused a strong sympathy in my mind for your strange friend, and must tell me more about her another time. I would only say this : May a well-bred girl hear what more you can tell of her, without a blush of shame?"

"Most certainly, if you see no harm in talking of a noble woman who had no one to protect her but herself."

"And you—do not forget yourself !" cried Henrika as she left the room.

The organist walked, musing, homewards. Was Isabella a relation of the Hoogstratens? He had told Henrika almost all he knew of her outward circumstances, and perhaps, indeed, that gave her a right to call his friend an adventuress, as many had already done in Rome. But the word pained him ; and Henrika's inquiry as to whether he had loved the stranger had disturbed him ; he had felt it to be forward and unbecoming. Yes, it was true ; he had

been passionately attached to her ; yes, he had found it hard to be no more to her than her very good comrade and trusted friend. It had cost him many a struggle to conceal his feelings from her, and he was conscious that, but for his dread of her repelling him and laughing at him, he must have yielded to the temptation, and have declared himself. Old wounds bled anew as he recalled the day when she had suddenly quitted Rome and him, without a parting word.

After narrowly escaping with his life from a severe attack of illness, he had made his way home, pale and broken ; and many months had passed before he could recover any real interest and pleasure even in his art. At first his memories of her had been full of nothing but bitterness ; but now, by silent and persistent determination, he had succeeded—not, indeed, in forgetting ; but in sifting out all painful feeling from the pure and precious pleasures of remembrance. To-day, the old struggle had begun again ; but he had no mind to yield, and he resolutely and faithfully bade the image of Isabella, in all her beauty, rise before his fancy.

Henrika went up to her aunt in a frame of strong excitement. Could it be that the adventuress of whom Wilhelm had spoken was in fact the one only living being that her proud and fiery spirit devotedly loved ? Was Isabella the sister she had lost ? There was much to cast doubt on the idea ; on the other hand it was quite possible. She tormented herself with questions ; the less peace her aunt allowed her the more her head ached, and she felt that she was beginning to succumb to the crushing influence of an attack of fever, against which she had been struggling for some days.

CHAPTER IX.

ON the evening of the third day after Wilhelm's interview with Henrika, his way led him along the Nobel Straat, and past the house of the Hoogstratens. Before he had reached it, he saw two gentlemen, preceded by a servant carrying a lantern, who were crossing the roadway to the house.

Wilhelm's attention was attracted ; the servant knocked at the door. The light from the lantern fell on the men's faces ; neither was unknown to him.

The little, slender old man, with a high peaked hat and short black cloak, was the Abbé Picard, a gay Parisian, who had come to Leyden about ten years since, and gave French lessons in the better and wealthier houses of the town. He had been Wilhelm's teacher ; but the musician's father, the receiver-general, would never have anything to do with the witty Abbé, for he was said to have left his dear France on account of some very doubtful transaction, and Herr Cornelius always smelt the Spanish spy in him. The other man, gray-headed, of middle height and excessively stout—taking many yards of cloth to make his fur-trimmed cloak—was Signor Lamperi, the representative in Antwerp of the great Italian trading-house of Bonvisi, who came every year with the storks and the swallows to

devote a few weeks to business in Leyden, and who was a very welcome guest in every tavern as an inexhaustible *raconteur* of facetious stories.

Before these two were admitted to the house they were joined by a third gentleman, before whom two servants walked, each with a lantern. His tall figure was wrapped in a very large cloak, and he too was past middle age. Nor was he a stranger to Wilhelm, for Monseigneur Gloria, the Roman priest, who not unfrequently came to Leyden from Haarlem, was a patron of the noble art of music, and when the young organist had set out on his travels to Italy had supplied him, notwithstanding his heretical creed, with valuable letters of introduction.

Wilhelm went on his way as soon as the door had closed after admitting the three gentlemen. Belotti had told him the day before that the younger lady seemed to be very unwell; but as the aunt was receiving company the niece was, no doubt, well enough to appear.

The first-floor windows of the house were brilliantly lighted up, but on the second floor a dim and steady light shone out from one window only on the Nobel Straat, while she for whom it was burning sat, resting her forehead on the marble top of a rickety old table, her eyes bright with a fevered glow. Henrika was quite alone in the spacious and lofty room that her aunt had assigned to her. The bedstead, a ponderous structure of huge size, stood behind curtains of thick gold brocade, and the rest of the furniture was equally heavy and shabbily splendid. Every chair and table looked as if it had been brought there from some dilapidated banqueting hall. Nothing really needful was lacking, but yet it was anything rather than comfortable or snug, and no one could have dreamed that a young girl

dwelt there, if a gilt harp had not leant against the large, hard-stuffed couch by the fireplace.

Henrika's head was burning, while her feet were frozen on the inlaid and carpetless marble floor, though she had wrapped a shawl round them and over her knees.

Not long after the three gentlemen had come into the house a lady mounted slowly the stairs leading from the first to the second story. Henrika's overstrained nerves heard the light sound of her satin shoes and the rustle of her silk train long before the wearer had reached the room, and she sat bolt upright in her chair, though she breathed more quickly. A rough hand opened the door without knocking, and the old Fraülein van Hoogstraten came straight up to her niece. The elder lady had once been handsome, but now, and particularly at this moment, her appearance was both strange and unpleasing. Her bent and meagre person was dressed in a long gown, with a train of heavy red silk ; her small head was lost in a lace ruff of portentous height and fulness. Over the withered throat, which was revealed by the open shape of her bodice, fell long strings of pearls and sparkling stones ; and her hair, dyed to the Venetian red-gold hue, was covered by a roll of pale blue velvet, decorated with an ostrich feather. A strong perfume was wafted before her ; and she herself perhaps felt it to be overpowering, for a large tinselled fan that she held was in constant motion, and waved with wrathful energy when, to her aunt's abrupt address,

"Come, come," Henrika answered positively : "No, aunt."

The old lady, however, had no idea of taking this for an answer. She repeated, "Come, be quick," in a more determined tone, and, by way of argument, added impressively, "Monseigneur is come, and wishes to hear you."

"A great honour," said the girl; "a very great honour. But how often must I repeat, I am not coming?"

"And may I ask, madam, why not?" said her aunt.

"Because I can be of no good to your company," said Henrika vehemently: "because my head aches and my eyes smart, because I cannot sing to-night, and because—because—oh! I beg of you, leave me in peace."

The old lady dropped her fan, and asked coldly:

"Were you singing a couple of hours since—yes or no?"

"Yes."

"Then, your headache cannot be so very bad, and Denise will dress you."

"If she comes I shall send her away. When, just now, I was playing the harp it was in the hope of singing away the pain. For a few minutes it did me good, but now my head is throbbing twice as badly as before."

"Excuses!"

"Think what you will. Besides, if at this moment I felt as well and gay as a squirrel in a wood, I would not go downstairs to see your gentlemen. I mean to stay here, so now you know it. Here I mean to stay. You may take my word for it, and I am as much a Hoogstraten as you are."

Henrika had risen to her feet, and her eyes flashed with an uncanny light at her tyrant; the older lady waved her fan quicker than before, and her prominent chin quivered angrily. Then she said:

"Your word for it! then you will not come?"

"Most assuredly not," said the girl with audacious determination.

"You must take your own way," said the aunt, turning to go; "but you may carry it too far. Your father will not have to thank you for this!"

With these words Mistress van Hoogstraten gathered up her train and went towards the door. There she paused and looked round once more inquiringly at Henrika. Her niece saw her hesitation, but she purposely and carefully turned her back without vouchsafing any sort of answer to the implied threat.

No sooner had the door closed than the young girl sank into her chair again with her head resting on the marble slab, and there she remained motionless for some time. Then she rose with swift vehemence, as though she had heard some imperious call, threw open the lid of her chest, tossed out the stockings, bodices, and shoes, that came in her way, here and there, all over the floor, and did not give up her search till she had laid her hand on some sheets of letter-paper which she had brought with her other properties from her father's castle.

As she rose to her feet again she turned giddy ; however, she kept herself from falling, and managed to carry the writing-paper and a note-book, and then a ponderous inkstand, which had long been standing in the room, to the table, before which she sat down again.

Leaning back in the chair she proceeded to write ; the book which served her as a desk lay on her knees, and the paper on the book ; the goose quill creaked and sputtered as it formed the stiff letters on the page. Henrika was not unpractised in writing, but it was a terribly difficult task this evening, it would seem, for the moisture stood on her brow, her lips were pinched with acute pain, and as often as she had finished a few lines she closed her eyes or took a deep draught from a jug of water which was standing near.

All was silent in the vacant room, but now and again the quiet that surrounded her was interrupted by strange

noises and voices coming up from the supper-room, which was just underneath. The clink of glasses, a high-pitched titter, a loud deep laugh, a few bars of some over-free love-song, cheers and *vivas*, and then the sharp clatter of a glass intentionally broken, came up, discordant and confused, to her ear. She tried not to hear it, but she could not help it, and set her teeth in anger and disgust. And then her pen came altogether to a standstill.

What she had written were incoherent sentences, some very long, and so involved and disconnected as to be unintelligible. Here was a gap in the sense, there a word was written twice or thrice over. The whole result was like a letter written by some crazy creature, but every line, every stroke of the pen, expressed the wish—the passionate longing—Away from hence—away from this woman and this house.

The petition was addressed to her father. She implored him to release her, to fetch her away, or send for her. Her uncle, Matenesse van Wibisma, she said, seemed to be an untrustworthy messenger; he perhaps had formerly taken pleasure in these evenings at her aunt's, which filled her with loathing. She would run away, like her sister, alone into the wide world, if her father compelled her to remain here. Then she gave an account of her aunt and her proceedings; the picture of the days and nights, as she had now for some weeks spent them under the old lady's roof, set forth a series of grievances, small and great, and of demands derogatory to her position or to her character, in the most glaring and uncompromising colours.

Too often had the drinking and laughter she now heard been repeated in the room below; but it was not that alone—it was that Henrika herself had always been required to join her aunt's guests: old men, French or Italians, of licentious

habits and loose morality. While she sat writing this document the blood mounted hotter to her burning cheeks, and her pen-strokes grew longer and more devious. The things she had heard the Abbé tell, and her aunt laugh at, or the Italian proclaim, while Monseigneur only condemned them with a shake of the head, smiling the while,—all this was so shameless and coarse that it would have soiled her page to repeat it.

Was she a high-bred lady, or was she not? She would perish, hungry and thirsty, rather than be any longer a witness to such a state of things. Again, when the supper-room was deserted, more intolerable claims were made upon Henrika, for her aunt could not bear to be alone for an instant, was sickly and unhappy, and the girl had to nurse her. That she did not shrink from helping the sick and suffering she had proved—so she wrote—by nursing the children in their own village; but, when her aunt could not sleep, she had to sit up all night, holding her hand and listening to her while she sometimes lamented, whimpered, and prayed, and at others cursed herself, and the whole wicked and treacherous world. She, Henrika, had come there strong and healthy, but so much that was loathsome to her, so much annoyance and over-fatigue, had quite broken her health.

At midnight she was still writing; but the letters were every moment less legible, the lines more irregular and slanting, and as she ended with the words, "My poor head! You see, I am losing my reason. I beg—I entreat you, my dear but stern father, take me home again. I have heard something too that may relate to Anna——" her eyes grew dim, the pen dropped from her hand, and she fell back senseless in her chair.

And there she remained till the last laugh and the last

clink of glasses had died away in the room below, and her aunt's guests had left the house. Denise, the waiting-woman, observing the light in the young girl's room, went in, and after endeavouring to rouse Henrika she fetched her mistress. The old lady followed the maid, muttering as she went upstairs :

"She is only gone to sleep ; sheer dulness—nothing else. Downstairs, with us, she might have kept awake and laughed. A degenerate race—'a people made of butter,' as King Philip says ! That madcap Lamperi behaved in such a manner this evening—and the Abbé said such things ——" The old woman's large eyes sparkled with wine, and she fluttered her fan to cool her scorching cheeks.

By this time she was standing opposite Henrika ; she called her name, shook her, and sprinkled her face with some strongly-scented spirit out of a monstrous pearl, set in gold, which hung at her girdle. But when her niece, after all this, only muttered a few unintelligible words, she desired the waiting-maid to fetch her medicine-chest. Denise obeyed, and while she was gone the old lady's eyes fell upon Henrika's letter ; she snatched it up, hastily read it with growing indignation, and at last, tossing it on to the floor, once more tried to shake her niece into consciousness ; but in vain.

Meanwhile, the steward had become aware of Henrika's serious illness, and, being devotedly attached to the young girl, he took upon himself to call in a physician, and to send for the Chaplain Damianus, in the place of the exiled spiritual director of the family.

Before he had got into Henrika's room the old lady called out to him in the utmost excitement :

"Belotti ! What is to be done now, Belotti ? . Sicknes

in the house ! something contagious, no doubt, perhaps the plague even ! ”

“ It only seems to be an attack of fever,” said the Italian soothingly. “ Come, Denise, between us we will lift the young lady on to her bed. The doctor will soon be here.”

“ The doctor ! ” cried his mistress, striking the marble table violently with her fan, “ who gave you leave, Belotti ? ”

“ We are Christians,” replied Belotti, not without dignity.

“ Very good ! very good ! ” cried the old lady : “ do as you please, call in whom you choose, but Henrika cannot stop here. Contagion in the house—the plague—the house marked as plague-stricken ! ”

“ Eccellenza, you are agitating yourself quite without cause. We will first hear what the doctor says.”

“ I will not listen to him—I cannot bear the plague or the smallpox. Go down at once, Belotti, and have a litter got ready : the old squire’s room in the outhouse is empty.”

“ But, Eccellenza, it is stuffy, and so damp that the north wall is covered with mildew.”

“ Then let it be aired and cleaned. What do you mean by hesitating ? your business is to obey : do you understand me, sir ? ”

“ The squire’s room is not fit for my noble mistress’s sick niece,” replied Belotti, civilly but decidedly.

“ Indeed ? and are you sure of that ? ” retorted the lady scornfully. “ Go downstairs, Denise, and have the litter brought up. Have you anything more to say, Belotti ? ”

“ Yes, my lady,” said the Italian in a trembling voice ; “ I beg leave to quit.”

"To quit my service?"

"By your leave, Excellenza,—to quit your service."

The old lady was startled; she held her fan tightly with both hands as she said:

"You are touchy, Belotti!"

"No, my lady; but I am growing old, and I dread such a misfortune as it would be to fall ill in your house."

His mistress shrugged her shoulders, and turning to the maid, she said:

"The litter, Denise—Belotti, I dismiss you."

CHAPTER X.

A GLORIOUS morning dawned after the night in which suffering and sickness had fallen on the house of Hoogstraten. The storks once more thought well of Holland, and with a triumphant clatter flew abroad over the meadows that lay bright in the sunshine. It was such a day as the end of April often brings us, as if to prove to men that they pay it too little honour, and too much to its highly praised successor, the month of May. April may boast that the spring is born under its auspices ; and its blooming follower only nurtures the strength and develops the beauty of the time of flowers.

It was Sunday, and the traveller who has wandered in Holland on a Sunday,—along the sunny paths, across the flower-decked meadows, where countless dappled cattle calmly graze, and fleecy flocks and lazy horses feed ; where he meets peasants in their clean, best clothes, and their womankind with their spick-and-span gold ornaments shining under snow-white lace caps ; holiday-making town-folk, in Sunday finery, and troops of children let out of school,—might easily believe that nature too has donned a holiday dress of tenderer green, intenser blue, and gayer-tinted flowers, than she wears on week-days.

A happy sense of respite and contentment filled the

hearts of the Leydeners, who, some on foot, some in large overcrowded waggons, and some on the Rhine in gaily-dressed boats, left the town on that particular Sunday to spend the hours of rest from labour with wife and child, and refresh themselves in the open air with farm-bread, golden butter, and new cheese, with milk, or cool draughts of beer.

The organist had long since finished his duties in the church, but he had not gone into the country with his comrades, for he loved to spend his leisure hours on such peaceful holidays in long excursions, in which there was no wear and tear of shoe-leather. They carried him in long flights across his native plains, over the mountains and valleys of Germany, beyond the Alps, into Italy. And he was master of a little perch, as it were, which seemed made on purpose for such dreams of past times and foreign lands, and for such oblivion of the present and of his immediate surroundings. His brothers, Ulrich and Johannes—musicians like himself, who ungrudgingly recognised Wilhelm's superiority, and were always ready to contribute to his advancement—during his absence in Italy had contrived for him a neatly-built little room, on one side of the slanting roof of their father's house, from which a wide door opened on to a little balcony with a wooden seat, where Wilhelm loved to sit watching the flight of his pigeons, gazing dreamily into the distance, or, if he were in the mood for composition, listening with his inner ear to the harmonies that his brain created.

A beautiful panorama lay below this elevated spot, for the house stood alone ; indeed, one could see almost as far into the distance from this eyry as from the top of the Burcht, the old Roman tower in the middle of the town. Leyden lay, like a spider in its net, in the midst of the

innumerable canals and branches of the river that intersected the meadows. The red-brick walls of the ramparts, with their towers and bastions, encircled the prim little town, as a fillet binds the locks of a young girl, their bases bathed by the dark waters of a moat ; while forts and outworks formed a bristling but broken outer ring beyond—a loose but thorny crown. Between these advanced defences and the town walls, the herds of the citizens pastured, and villages and hamlets clustered under their protection. On this clear April day, looking northwards, the Lake of Haarlem could be seen ; out there, to the west, beyond the leafy curves of the woods, now freshly green, lay the *dunes*, or sandbanks, piled up by nature to protect the land against the encroaching sea. The long chain of hillocks offered a firmer and more impregnable front to the inroads of the flood than the earthworks and forts of Alfen, Leyderdorp, and Valkenburg, on the shores of the Rhine, to the invading Spanish foe.

The Rhine ! Wilhelm looked down on its narrow and sluggish stream, and compared it with a dethroned king, stripped of his power and greatness, and to whom it only remains to dispense blessing in a narrow circle out of the small possessions he has been able to retain. The musician knew the lordly German Rhine, and often in spirit followed it to the south ; but oftener still his dreams carried him, with one long leap, to the Lake of Lugano, the gem of the Western Alps ; as he thought of it, and of the Mediterranean, their emerald green and radiant blue and golden light sparkled before his mind's eye, and in such an hour all his thoughts and memories took form in harmony and heavenly music.

Then, his journey from Lugano to Milan ! the vehicle that had carried him to da-Vinci's city was but a humble

one, and crowded with passengers, but in it he had met Isabella. And Rome!—eternal, glorious, never-to-be-forgotten Rome!—where man outgrows his former self, and gathers force and mental wealth so long as he remains in it, and which pursues him with unsatisfied longing when he has turned his back upon it.

It was on the shores of the Tiber that Wilhelm had first understood what art—his own glorious art—might be; there, in the society of Isabella, a new world had been opened to him; but, alas! a keen frost had nipped the flowers that had blossomed for him there; they were dead, he knew it—they could never bear fruit.

He could succeed to-day in once more recalling in fancy the perfect image of her young beauty, and in thinking of her, not as his lost love, but as his kind and generous friend,—in dreaming of a sky as deeply blue as sapphire, or diaphanous Cyanea, of slender columns and plashing fountains, of olive-groves and marble statues, of solemn, cool churches and shining white villas, of sparkling eyes and purple wine, of glorious choirs, and of Isabella's voice.

The pigeons which were cooing and gurgling in the cote hard by, flying out and back again, might fuss and flutter as they list, for their master neither heard nor heeded them.

Allerts, the fencing-master, mounted the ladder which led to his observatory, but Wilhelm did not notice him till he was actually standing on the little platform by his side, and addressing him in his gruff tones:

"Where are our thoughts, Master Wilhelm?" he asked; "in this cloth-weaving town of Leyden? Nay, nay! Up on Olympus, perhaps, with the muse of harmony, if, indeed, it is there that she dwells!"

"Rightly guessed," replied Wilhelm, pushing back the

hair from his forehead with both hands. "I was on a visit to the lady, and she sends you her compliments."

"Then pray offer her mine in return," replied the other, "though, in truth, we are but slightly acquainted. My gullet is better adapted to drinking than singing. By your leave?" and the soldier took up the tankard—which Wilhelm's mother never failed to fill every morning, and place in her favourite's room—and took a deep draught. Then, wiping his lips, he went on :

"That has done me good, for I wanted it badly. The men wanted to go out on a ploy instead of drilling, but we made them do it—Baron van Warmond, Duivenvoorde, and I. Who knows how soon we may have to show what stuff we are made of! By Roland, my former self! such stupidity is like a lout's cudgel: it is of no use to fight against it with a Florence rapier, or the subtleties of tierce and carte. The hail has beaten down all my wheat."

"Then let it lie, and see if the barley and clover thrive better," said Wilhelm gaily, as he threw some tares and corn to a fine pigeon which had perched on the railing of his little balcony.

"It eats and eats, and of what use is it?" cried Allertssohn, looking at the bird. "The Baron van Warmond, a young man after God's heart, has just brought me a couple of falcons; would you like to see how I train them?"

"No, Captain, thanks. I have enough to occupy me with music and my pigeons."

"Well, it is your own affair. That long-necked bird is a comical fellow."

"And what country do you think he is a native of? There, he has flown off to the others. Just watch the rascal a minute, and then tell me."

"You had better ask King Solomon ; he was hail-fellow-well-met with all the birds."

"Just keep an eye upon him, and you will soon find out."

"He has a very straight neck, and holds his head uncommonly high."

"And look at his beak."

"It is as hooked as a vulture's. By all that's spiteful ! look at the creature wheeling round and round, with its claws out ; stop, thief ! he is pecking one of the young ones to death. As I am alive, the ruffian must be a Spanish bully !"

"Rightly guessed ; it is a Spanish pigeon. It flew to my cote of its own accord, but I cannot bear the bird, and drive it away, for I only keep a few pairs all of the same breed, and I want to improve the strain. If you try to rear different races under the same roof you spoil them all."

"That is easy to suppose. But it does not seem to me that you have chosen the prettiest variety."

"No, Captain ; those birds are a cross between the carrier and the tumbler, the Antwerp strain of carrier-pigeons—blue, red, or dappled. I do not care about the colour, but they must have small bodies and large wings, with a broad web to the primaries, and, above all, strong muscles. There—wait till I have caught him—there is one of my best fliers ; just try to raise his wings."

"Mercy on us ! how strong the little creature is in the joints, and how close it keeps its wings. A falcon is not much stronger."

"It is a leader pigeon, and can find its way all by itself."

"Why do you keep no white tumblers ? I should

have thought that you could follow their flight longest with the eye."

"Because it is with birds as with men. Those that are brightest and most conspicuous from afar are beset by the envious and malevolent, and birds of prey fall upon white pigeons first. I can tell you, Master, a man with eyes in his head can study in a dovecot all the ways on earth of the children of Adam and Eve."

"There are squabbles and kissing up here just as there are down in the town there."

"Precisely so, Captain. When I try to match an old pigeon with a much younger one it seldom comes to any good. When the cock-bird is courting, he can pay the lady as many compliments as the boldest gallant to his mistress. And do you know what all that billing means? the suitor feeds his lady-love—that is to say, he tries to win her favour with pretty presents. Then comes the wedding, and they build their nest. If they have young birds, they both feed them in perfect harmony. The highly-bred pigeons do not sit well, and we hatch their eggs under commoner birds."

"Those are the fine ladies, who must have wet-nurses for their babies."

"And unpaired pigeons often make mischief among the paired ones."

"Be warned by example, young man, and beware of being an old bachelor. But I will not have anything said against the women who remain unmarried; I have known many a sweet and helpful soul among them."

"So have I, but some spiteful ones too, as well as in the pigeon-house. On the whole, my pets make happy marriages, but when separation is necessary——"

"Which, as a rule, is the guilty party?"



"Nine times out of ten it is the lady."

"By Roland, my former self! just as it is among men," cried the Captain, clapping his hands.

"What do you mean by Roland, your former self, Master Allerts? you promised me the other day—but who is coming up the ladder?"

"I hear your mother speak."

"Then she is bringing up a visitor. I know that voice, and yet—stay, it is old Mistress van Hoogstraten's steward."

"From the Nobel Straat? Let me be off, then, Wilhelm, for that brood of Glippers——"

"Stay a little while; there is only room for one at a time on the ladder," said the musician, as he held out his hand to Belotti to help him up the last rounds, and into his attic.

"Spaniards and their followers," muttered the fencing-master; then he went to the door, and, as he went down the ladder, he called out: "I will wait down here till the air is clear again."

The steward's handsome face, usually so carefully and cleanly shaved, to-day displayed a stubbly growth of beard, and the old man looked sad and over-wrought as he began to tell Wilhelm all that had happened in his mistress's house since the previous evening.

"We who have quick blood," added the Italian, as he finished his story, "grow feebler as we grow older, but not calmer. I could not stand by and see that poor angel—for she is worthy to stand by the Virgin's throne—treated like a sick dog that you turn out of the kennel, and so I took my leave."

"It does you honour, but it was not the best moment to choose for doing it. Has the poor young lady really been sent away into the damp room?"

"No, Master ; for Pater Damianus came, and he gave my mistress to understand what the Holy Virgin expects of Christian men, and when the Padrona tried, all the same, to carry things her own way with a high hand, the saintly man spoke to her so sharply and severely that she was forced to give in. The Signorina is safe in her own bed ; but her cheeks are scarlet, and she talks like a crazy creature."

"And who is treating her for her fever?"

"It was about a leech that I came to you, dear Master Wilhelm ; for Doctor de Bont, who came at once when I sent for him, was so shamefully received by my mistress that he soon turned his back upon her, and told me, as he left the house, that he would not come into it again."

Wilhelm shook his head, and the Italian went on :

"Of course there are other physicians in Leyden, but Father Damianus says that De Bont, or Bontius, as they call him, is the cleverest and most learned of all ; and as the old lady herself had an attack of some kind this forenoon, and certainly will not be out of bed to-day, the coast is clear again ; and Father Damianus says that if it is necessary, he will himself go to Doctor Bontius. But as you are a native of the town, and as you know the Signorina, I should be glad to spare our good Pater the refusal he is only too likely to meet with from the foe of our Holy Church. The poor man has enough to bear as it is from the idle boys and ne'er-do-weels, when he carries the blessed Sacrament through the town."

"But you know that the people are strictly forbidden to interfere with him in the duties of his calling."

"And yet he cannot show himself in the streets without being mocked and giped at. Well, Master, we two cannot change the world. So long as the Church held the reins she

burned and quartered you heretics ; and now that you have the upper hand our priests are persecuted and scoffed at."

"But it is against the law and the orders of the municipality."

"You cannot control the mob—and Pater Damianus is a lamb, who bears everything meekly, every whit as good a Christian as many a saint before whom we burn tapers. Do you know the Doctor?"

"A little, by sight."

"Ah! then go to him, Master, for the young lady's sake," cried the old man with pathetic urgency; "it is in your power to save a life—a young, sweet human life!"

The steward's eyes glittered with moisture. Just as Wilhelm had laid his hand on the old man's arm, and was saying with earnest feeling, "I will do what I can," the fencing-master shouted up: "Your council is lasting too long—I am tired of it; good-bye for the present."

"Nay, Captain, stop! Come up here for a minute. This good gentleman has come here on behalf of a poor sick girl; the helpless creature is lying uncared for and alone, for her aunt, old Mistress van Hoogstraten, turned away Doctor de Bont from her bedside because he is a Calvinist."

"From the bedside of a dying girl?"

"It is horrible and mean—and now the old lady herself has fallen sick."

"Bravo! I am glad to hear it," cried the soldier, clapping his hands. "If Old Nick is not afraid of her, and likes to come and fetch her, I will pay for the post-horses. But how about the girl—the sick girl?"

"Our friend here wants to persuade me to beg De Bont to go to see her again. Now you are a friend of the Doctor's."

"I was, Wilhelm—I was ; however, last Friday we had a sharp discussion about the new regulation helmets, and now your learned demigod expects me to apologise. But to beat a retreat is not in my line——"

"Oh ! my dear sir," cried Belotti, with pressing eagerness, "the poor child is lying there quite alone, in a raging fever. If heaven ever blessed you with children of your own——"

"That will do, old man—that will do !" said the fencing-master, and he kindly laid his hand on Belotti's gray hair ; "my children, I take it, are no concern of yours—but we will do what we can for the fair damsel. Till we meet again, gentlemen ! By Roland, my former self ! what may we not live to see yet ? Hemp is cheap in Holland, and yet such a fiend is allowed to live till she is as old as a raven !"

With these words he went down the ladder. As he went along the streets he weighed and muttered the words in which to apologise to Doctor de Bont, making a face over them as if they had been wormwood in his mouth ; but now and again a smile lighted up his eyes nevertheless, and wrinkled his bearded lips.

His learned friend was ready to make the task an easy one ; and when Belotti got home again he found the physician by the sick girl's bed.

CHAPTER XI.

DAME ELISABETH VAN NORDWYK and the town-secretary's wife, Dame van Hout, had each separately pressed the Burgomaster's wife to go with her into the country, and enjoy the fine spring Sunday ; still, and in spite of Barbara's persuasion, the young wife could not be induced to accept their invitations.

Eight days had passed since her husband's departure,—eight days that had dragged their weary length from morning till night as dully as the torpid stream in one of the ditches that intersect the Dutch fields creeps down to join the river. Sleep loves to visit the pillow of youth, and it had returned even to hers ; but with the dawn her discontent came back, her unrest, and the unsatisfied craving to which sleep had brought a merciful truce. She felt that this was not as it should be, and that her father would have blamed her if he could have seen her thus.

There are some women who are ashamed to wear rosy cheeks and to own to a frank enjoyment of existence,—who cherish a dismal satisfaction in the sense of grief and suffering. But Maria was assuredly not one of these. She would thankfully have been happy, and she left no means untried to recover her lost cheerfulness. With the honest purpose of doing her duty she went back to Lisa's bedside,

but the child was fast recovering, and always called for Barbara, Adrian, or Truitje, as soon as she found herself alone with Maria. Then she tried to read, but the few books she had brought from Delft she knew too well, and her thoughts would wander into their own channel before she could fix them on the old familiar page. Wilhelm had brought the new motett, and she tried to sing it through; but music requires the whole heart and mind of those who would benefit by its gifts, and refused to afford her either consolation or pleasure while her spirit was absent, busied with other things.

When she helped Adrian with his tasks her patience failed much sooner than it had been wont. On the first market day she sallied out with Truitje, to obey her husband's commands and to make purchases; and while she moved among the crowd from place to place, where the different wares and provisions were put out for sale—here meat, there fish, here again vegetables—while on every side the vendors called and clamoured to her: "Here, Dame, this way;" and "Here, Dame, I have the thing you want!"—she forgot for the time the trouble that weighed upon her. With revived energies she set to work to taste meal and pease, and smell at dried fish; and felt it a point of honour to select them well: Barbara should see she knew how to market. The crowd was dense in every part, for the town authorities had issued a proclamation that, in view of the threatening danger, every household should lay in an abundant stock of provisions on every market day; but even those who were buying up food stuffs with a view to retailing them later, made way for the Burgomaster's pretty young wife, and this flattered and pleased her.

She returned home with a bright face, happy to have done her best, and went straight to Barbara in the kitchen.

Peter's kind-hearted sister had of course observed how heavy the poor young wife's heart was, and she had been glad to see her set out on her marketing expedition. Choosing and chaffering would divert her thoughts from their melancholy channel. But the prudent housewife (who credited Maria with every virtue but the capacity for shrewd and careful housewifery) took the precaution of warning Truitje not to lay in too great a stock of provisions. When the demand on a market is double and treble the supply, prices rapidly rise, and thus it came to pass that, when Maria told the widow how much she had paid for this or that necessary article, Barbara could do nothing but exclaim: "But, child, that is dreadfully dear!" or, "Such prices will make beggars of us!"

These exclamations—most of them, under the circumstances, wholly unreasonable—annoyed and hurt Maria; still, peace with her sister-in-law was dear to her; hard as it was to submit to injustice, it was not in her nature to express her vexation in angry words, and it would have been a painful effort. So she only said with some irritation: "I can only beg you to ask other people what they had to pay, and then scold me if you think it just!"

And with these words she left the kitchen.

"But I am not scolding you, child!" cried Barbara.


But Maria would not hear. She hastily went upstairs, and locked herself into her own room. All her satisfaction was dashed again.

On Sunday she went to church. After dinner she filled a linen satchel with small provisions for Adrian, who was going on a boating excursion with some friends, and then she seated herself by the window in her own room. Well-dressed citizens—among them several members of the town council—came down the street with their wives and

children in Sunday array. Young girls with flowers in their tuckers passed in twos and threes over the bridge across the Gracht, to join the dancers at a village outside the Zyl Gate. They walked primly along in silence, and with down-cast eyes; but many a cheek was tinged with a blush, and more than one rosy mouth parted in an irresistible smile, when the young men who followed in the wake of the demure damsels—as gay and devious themselves as the gulls that flutter after a ship—broke out into some saucy jest, or whispered a word to one which no third person was meant to overhear.

Each and all, as they streamed towards the Zyl Gate, seemed careless and content; and it could be seen in every face that all looked forward to happy hours out in the sunny fields and under the open sky. Even to Maria the pleasure that attracted them seemed sweet and desirable; but what part had she with these gay folks—she with an aching heart among strangers? The shadows of the houses seemed to her darker than usual, the air of the town more oppressive; and she felt as if the spring had come for all men, great and small, old and young, excepting herself alone.

The masts and trees by the banks of the Achter Gracht were already beginning to cast longer shadows, and the golden mist that hung above the roofs was taking a tender pink tinge, when Maria heard approaching hoofs. She drew herself stiffly up, and her heart beat violently. She would receive Peter somewhat differently from her wont; she must be frank with him, and show him what she felt, and that matters could not go on in this way; and she was still seeking words in which to express what she had to say, when the horse stopped before the door. She went to the window and saw her husband fling himself from the



saddle and look eagerly up at her room. She would not send him a greeting, but her heart drew her to him ; all discontent, every grudging thought was forgotten, and with winged steps she flew along the corridor to the head of the stairs. He had come into the hall, and she called his name.

"Maria, child, is that you?" he cried out, and, trembling like a lover, he rushed up the stairs, met her on the top step, and clasped her with passionate tenderness to his heart.

"At last, at last, I have you again!" he said joyfully, kissing her eyes and soft hair. She had clasped her arms tightly round his neck, but he gently released himself, and while he held her in his own he asked: "Are Barbara and Adrian at home?"

She shook her head. He smiled, and stooping down lifted her up like a child, and carried her into his study. Just as some fine tree standing by a burning house is caught at last by the flames, though men have tried to save it by pouring cold water over it, so her cherished determination to receive him coolly was vanquished by the warmth of his affection. She was heartily happy to have him near her again, and quite ready to believe him when, with tender words, he told her how bitterly he had felt their separation, how much he had missed her, and how her image had always stood plainly before his fancy, though generally he had no capacity for recalling an absent face.

How warmly, how convincingly, he could assure her of his devotion! She was still a happy woman, and she did not try to restrain the full expression of her happiness.

Adrian and Barbara soon came in, and then, at supper, how much there was to tell! Peter had had many adventures on his journey, and had come home with


renewed hopes ; the lad had done well at school, and Liesje's illness was already a danger of the past which had ended well. Barbara was radiant with satisfaction, for everything seemed to be on the happiest footing between her brother and his wife. So the sweet April evening passed happily by.

The next morning, as Maria plaited her hair with black velvet ribbons, she felt glad and thankful, for she had found courage to tell Peter that she longed to have a greater part in his anxieties than he had hitherto allowed her, and he had met her with full consent. Now, she hoped, a broader and worthier life was about to begin for her ; to-day he was to tell her all he had arranged and carried out with the Prince at Dortrecht, for till this moment not a word on this subject had passed his lips.

Barbara, who was bustling about the kitchen, and just then trying to capture three young fowls with a view to their instant execution, granted them a brief respite, and even threw a handful of barley into the coop, as she heard her sister-in-law come singing down the stairs. The fragmentary bars of Wilhelm's new madrigal sounded as sweetly in her ears, and as full of promise, as the song of the nightingale when the husbandman first hears it after a long winter. Spring-time had come into the house again, and her kind round face shone smiling and unclouded out of her big cap, like a sunflower in the midst of its green leaves, as she exclaimed to Maria :

"This is a good day for you, child ; we will melt down the butter to keep, and salt the bacon."

It sounded as pleasant as an invitation to Paradise, and Maria gladly helped in the work, which they began without delay. When the widow's hands were busy her tongue was never still, and her curiosity was not a little



excited as to what might have passed between Peter and his young wife.

She soon skilfully brought the conversation round to the returned traveller, and then, as if by chance, out came the question :

"And has he given you any sufficient reason for setting out on his wedding-day?"

"Of course I knew he could not stay."

"Of course not—of course not! But if you make yourself out green the goats will eat you. It does not do to put up with too much from a man. Give and take, I say. An injustice done you is as good as hard cash in married life, and you ought to get a good calf for your money."

"I do not want to drive a bargain with Peter; and if one thing and another did weigh on my mind, after such a long separation I was glad to forget it."

"A damp truss of hay is enough to spoil a whole stack, and when a hare has got into your cabbage garden you had better catch it. You should never nurse up a thing that worries you, but have it out in broad daylight. That is what man has a tongue for, and yesterday was the day when you ought to have made a clean breast of everything that troubled you."

"But he was so glad to get home; and, besides, what makes you think I am unhappy?"

"Unhappy? Who said so?"


Maria coloured, and the widow took up a knife and opened the hencoop.

Truitje was helping the two housewives in their work in the kitchen; but she was often interrupted, for the door-knocker never rested that morning, and the visitors must have brought anything rather than pleasing news to the Burgo-

master, for his deep, angry tones were often audible even in the kitchen.

His longest interview was with the Town-clerk, Van Hout, who came to him not merely to learn his news and report progress, but with a serious list of complaints to make. It was a singular scene when these two men, who so far exceeded their fellow-citizens not only in physical presence and in moral dignity, but in enthusiastic devotion to the cause of freedom, mutually expressed and explained their views and their common sense of dissatisfaction. Van Hout, fiery, eager, and imaginative, led the duet; Van der Werff, deliberate and reticent, took the second with anxious earnestness.

There was much disaffection among the elders and authorities of the town, the wealthy old families and the great weavers and brewers; for with them life, possessions, and position, were more precious than religion and liberty; while the poor man, who painfully earned bread for his family in the sweat of his brow, was cheerfully resolved to shed his blood and sacrifice his all for the good cause. Thus there were endless difficulties to be met and dealt with. Every shed or scaffolding, the tenter-frames, and woodwork of all kinds which might serve to shelter or conceal a man, must be laid level with the earth, as already every garden-house and building near the city walls had been razed to the ground. A great deal of newly erected woodwork had indeed been removed, but the richer owners were those who held out longest against laying the axe to them. New earthworks had been begun round the strong fort of Valkenburg, but part of the land which the labourers had to dig out belonged to a brewer, who asked enormous compensation for the injury to his fields. During the former siege, which had been raised in March, paper



money had been issued—circular pieces of pasteboard—with the lion of the Netherlands on one side, and the motto, "*Haec libertatis ergo*;" and, on the other, the arms of the city, with the words, "*Gott behüte Leyden*" (God protect Leyden). This paper coinage ought to have been by this time exchanged for metal money or an equivalent in corn, but certain well-to-do speculators had chosen to hold over a quantity of the pieces, and were trying to force up their value.

Demands of every kind and from all sides were made on the Burgomaster's time and attention; and at the same time he had his own interests to consider, for all intercourse with the outer world might at any moment be cut off, and it was indispensable that he should settle a variety of matters with his business agent in Hamburg. He must in any case lose greatly, but he would leave nothing undone to secure what might yet be saved for his wife and children.

These he now saw but seldom: he thought he had amply redeemed the promise he had made to Maria on his return home, when he shortly answered her questions, or, of his own accord, briefly informed her:

"We had warm work to-day at the town-hall;" or, "The exchanging of the siege-tokens has given rise to greater difficulties than we had expected."

The kindly craving for confidence given and received was unknown to him; and his first wife had been perfectly content and happy when, in peaceful times, he had sat silent by her side, called her his dearest treasure, played with his children, or praised her *waffles* and the Sunday joint. His trade in leather and public affairs had been his business; the kitchen and the nursery had been hers. What they had in common was the certainty of each other's

affection, their children, and the respectability, dignity, and ownership of the house.

Maria wanted something more, and he was very ready to give it, but when in the evening she pressed the over-tired Burgomaster with questions which he was accustomed to hear only from men, he put her off till easier times for the answers, or even fell asleep in the middle of her eager questionings. She saw how overburdened he was—how unrestingly he toiled ; but why, then, did he not throw some of the labour and care on to other shoulders ?

One fine day he went with her out into the country ; she took the opportunity of representing to him that he owed it to himself, and to her, to allow himself more rest. He listened to her patiently, and when she had come to an end of her entreaties and warnings, he took her hand in his, and said :

“ You have seen Master Marnix St. Aldegonde, have you not ? and you know all that our cause owes to him. Do you know his favourite motto ? ”

She bowed her head, and answered softly : “ *Repos ailleurs.* ”

“ We can rest elsewhere,” he repeated gravely.

She shivered, and withdrawing her hand from his arm, she could not help thinking : “ Elsewhere ! not here, then—that is plain. Peace and happiness cannot dwell here ! ” She did not speak the words, but she could not get them out of her head.

CHAPTER XII.

THE Nobel Straat was still enough in these early days of spring, and the house of the Hoogstratens was stillest of all. The roadway in front of it had been strewn with straw and sand in obedience to Doctor de Bont's orders and those of the old lady's *chargé d'affaires*, for she was very ill. The windows were closely curtained, and a pad of cloth had been tied under the door-knocker. The door itself was left ajar, and close within sat a servant to give information to all who should call or ask admission. It was a morning early in May, when Wilhelm Corneliussohn and Janus Dousa turned into the Nobel Straat. The two men were in eager conversation, but as they approached the sand-strewn spot they at first lowered their tones, and presently were silent.

"This is the carpet spread for the feet of the all-conqueror, Death," said the Baron; "let us hope he will only lower his torch once before this house, and that he may confer the honour on the old woman, little as she is worthy of it. Do not stay too long in the infected house, Master Wilhelm."

The organist softly opened the door; the servant bowed to him without speaking, and went at once to call Belotti, for the "player" had already been more than once to call

upon the steward. He went into the little room where he was accustomed to wait, and there, for the first time, he found another visitor, and certainly in a strange position. Father Damianus was sitting in an arm-chair, bolt upright, but with his head sunk on one side, and fast asleep. The priest was a man of nearer forty than thirty, and his face, which was fringed with a thin, light-coloured beard, was as pink-and-white as a child's. A scanty line of pale-yellow hair edged his wide tonsure, and the sleeper's fingers, which had dropped on to his lap, held a rosary of olive-wood beads, browned by incessant use. A sweet and gentle smile curved his half-open lips.

"This mild-looking saint in his womanly robes does not look as if he had much grip in him," thought Wilhelm. "And yet his big hands are horny, as if they had done some hard work."

When Belotti came into the room and saw the sleeping priest, he carefully pushed a cushion under his head, and beckoned to Wilhelm to follow him out into the hall.

"Let us leave him to get a little rest," said the Italian. "He had been sitting by the Padrona's bedside since midday yesterday till about two hours ago. Most of the time she knows nothing of what is going on round her, but whenever she recovers consciousness she asks for spiritual consolation. Still, she will not receive the last sacraments, for she will not admit that she can be near her end. Every now and then, when the pain is worst, she asks in the greatest alarm whether everything is ready in case of need, for she is terrified at the thought of dying without extreme unction."

"And how is Mistress Henrika?"

"A very little better."

At this moment the *Pater* came out of the side-room ;

Belotti reverently kissed his hand, and Wilhelm bowed respectfully.

"I fell asleep," said Damianus simply, but in a less deep voice than it was natural to expect from his stalwart build and broad chest. "I will read mass, visit my sick, and return as soon as possible. Have you thought better of it, Belotti?"

"It is of no use, Father ; it will not do. I gave notice to quit on the first of May ; this is the eighth, and here I am still,—I would not leave the house, for I am a Christian ! But now, the ladies have a good doctor to take care of them ; Sister Gonzaga knows her duties ; you yourself deserve a place among the martyrs in Paradise for your devotion to them ; so I may tie up my bundle and be off without having a sin on my conscience."

"No—do not go, Belotti," said the priest earnestly, "or, if you persist in going your own way, at least do not boast of being a Christian."

"You will stay," cried Wilhelm, "if it is only for the sake of the young lady whom you love so well."

Belotti shook his head, and answered calmly :

"No, Master, you can add nothing to what the reverend Father put before me yesterday. My mind is made up, and I shall go : but, as I value your good opinion, and the reverend Father's, I would beg you to do me the favour of listening to what I have to say. I have seen two-and-sixty years, and an old horse and an old servant stand a long time in the market, waiting for a buyer. In Brussels I might find a place where a Catholic steward was needed who knows his business, but my old heart longs to see Naples once more—I cannot tell you how wearily. You, young Master, have seen our blue sea and sky ; and I long for them no doubt, but still more for other and smaller

things. It has been a great happiness to me that I have been able to speak my own tongue to you, Master Wilhelm, and to you, reverend Father : but there is a country where every one speaks as I do. There is a little village at the foot of Vesuvius—merciful Heaven ! why, many a man might be afraid to stay in it, even half-an-hour, when the mountain grumbles and thunders, and ashes fall in showers, and hot lava in fiery streams. Well, the houses there are not so neatly built, and the window-panes do not shine so clean as they do here in your country. I am almost afraid that there is hardly a pane of glass in all Resina, but the children do not freeze there any more than they do with you. Lord ! what would a Leyden housewife say to our village street ? Poles covered with vines, branches of fig, and washing of all colours on the roofs, out of the windows, and all over the rickety balconies ; orange and lemon trees loaded with golden fruits in the little garden-plots, where there are no straight paths and neatly-edged beds. Everything grows higgledy-piggledy, anyhow. And the boys, in their rags, which no tailor ever darned or patched, scramble about on the white walls that hedge in the vineyards ; and the little girls, whose mothers sit combing their hair outside the front door, are not so pink-and-white and spick-and-span clean as Dutch children, and yet I should like to see their little brown faces and black heads once more, with their bright, dark eyes ; and I long to end my days in the tumble-down old home among my nephews and nieces and relations, in the warm sunshine, free from toil and care.”

The old man's cheeks glowed as he spoke, and his black eyes flashed with a fire which till now the cold northern air and long years of servitude seemed to have extinguished. Then, as neither the priest nor the organist at once spoke when he paused, he went on :

"Monseigneur Gloria is going to Italy at once, and I can go with him as courier as far as Rome. Thence I shall easily reach Naples, and I can live there at ease on the interest of my savings. My future master starts on the 15th, and by the 12th I must be in Antwerp, where I am to join him."

The priest and the musician glanced at each other. Wilhelm had not the heart to oppose the steward's purpose, but Damianus did not hesitate; he laid his hand on the old man's shoulder, saying:

"If you stay here only a few weeks longer, Belotti, you will win the only real peace—I mean the peace of a good conscience. Those who are faithful unto death are promised the crown of life. When these evil times are past and over you will easily find means of making your way homewards smoothly and pleasantly. We shall meet again at noon, Belotti; if before that my aid is needed, send for me; old Ambersius knows where to find me. The blessing of God be with you—and if you will accept it at my hands, with you too, Master Wilhelm."

The priest left the house, and the steward said, with a sigh:

"So he will force me, willy-nilly, to do as he wishes. He abuses his power over men's souls. I am no saint, and what he expects of me——"

"Is what is right," interrupted Wilhelm boldly.

"Ah! but you do not know what it is to throw away the fondest hope of a long and troubled life, as if it were no more than an old shoe. And for what—I ask you, and for whom? Do you know my mistress? I tell you, Master, I have gone through things in this house, and seen things your young spirit cannot even dream of, and could never conceive of as possible. But the young mistress—you

are in love with her, Master Wilhelm? Am I right or no?"

"No, you are mistaken, Belotti."

"Really, truly? then, for your sake, I am glad; for you are a humble artist, and the Signorina bears the proud name of Hoogstraten, which is saying everything. Do you know the young lady's father?"

"No."

"There is a race—a race! Did you ever hear the history of our Signorina's elder sister?"

"Had Henrika an elder sister?"

"Yes, Master, and when I remember her—picture to yourself our Signorina, exactly, only taller, more stately, and handsomer."

"Isabella!" exclaimed the musician. A suspicion which had haunted him ever since his conversation with Henrika seemed suddenly confirmed as fact; he seized the steward's arm so hastily and unexpectedly that the old man shrank back as the musician exclaimed:

"What do you know of her? I entreat you, Belotti, tell me everything."

The old man glanced towards the stairs, and then, shaking his head, replied:

"There is some mistake. There never was an Isabella in the family to my knowledge; but I am at your service all the same. Call again after sundown, only do not expect to hear a pleasant tale."

Twilight had scarcely deepened into night when the musician betook himself again to the Hoogstratens' house. The little room was unoccupied, but he had not long to wait for Belotti. The old man set an elegant tray by the light on the table, with a flagon of wine and a glass; and when he had reported on the state of the two invalids,



offered the musician a seat with elaborate politeness. Wilhelm having asked him why he had not brought a glass for himself too, he replied :

"I never drink anything but water—but I will take the liberty to sit down. The footman has fled from the house, and the whole day I am running up and down stairs; it has tired my old legs till they ache, and there is no peace to be hoped for this night again."

The room was lighted by a single taper; Belotti, leaning far back in his arm-chair, slowly parted and raised his hands as he began : "Well, then—as I said this morning the Hoogstratens are a strange race. In most places the children of the same parents often turn out very different; but in your little country, which has its own peculiar tongue, and a good many other things peculiar to it besides—as you will not deny—every old family has its strongly-marked individuality. I ought to know, for I have been in and out of many a noble house in Holland. Every race has its own spirit and its own peculiar ways. Even when, saving your presence, there is a crack in the upper story, it is seldom confined to a single member of a family. My mistress has more of her French mother's ways——But I was to tell you about the Signorina, and I am wandering too far."

"No, Belotti, not at all; there is plenty of time, and I am glad to hear all you tell me; but first you must answer me one question."

"Eh, Master, how red your cheeks are!—You met my Signorina in Italy?"

"I believe so, Belotti."

"Ah then, to be sure!—those who had seen her once did not easily forget her. And what is it you want to know?"

"First of all the lady's name."

"Anna."

"And not Isabella as well?"

"No, Master; she was always called Anna."

"And when did she leave Holland?"

"Stop—it was four years next Easter."

"Is her hair black, brown, fair?"

"I told you, exactly like Mistress Henrika's. But what lady could not dye her hair black, brown, or fair? I think we should come straighter to the point if you would allow me to ask you a question. Had the lady of whom you speak a large half-moon scar, close under her hair in the middle of her forehead?"

"That settles it," said Wilhelm, starting up. "As a child she fell against some weapon of her father's."

"Quite the contrary, sir. The Baron van Hoogstraten's psitol-butt struck his sweet daughter's face. How horrified you look! My God! I have seen worse things than that in this house. And now it is my turn again: In what town in Italy did you meet the Signorina?"

"In Rome, alone and under an assumed name: Isabella—a Dutch girl! I implore you, Belotti, go on with your story; I will not interrupt you again. What could the child have done that her own father——"

"Of all the mad Hoogstratens the Baron is the wildest. In Italy you may have met his match; here in your country you would look a long time before you found such another whirlwind. Still, you must not think he is a bad-natured man; only a single word that goes against the grain, a mere sidelong glance, is enough to put him beside himself, and then he will do things that a man repents as soon as they have happened. With regard to the scar on his daughter's face, it fell out thus:—She was but a child, and of course she was not allowed to touch a gun with the tip of her

fingers, still she would do it whenever she had a chance, and once a pistol went off and the bullet struck the Baron's best hunting-dog. Her father heard the shot, and when he saw the dog lying dead, and the pistol at the child's feet, he snatched it up, and hit her with the heavy butt end."

"A child, his own daughter!" cried Wilhelm, furious.

"Well, you see there are various sorts of men," Belotti went on. "Some—and you no doubt are one of them—consider carefully before they speak or act; others think a long time, and when they have made up their minds there is a great flow of words but very little done; but a third sort—and the Hoogstratens at their head—heap deed on deed, and when they reflect at all it is mostly when they have acted and done with it. Then if they find they have done wrong, pride comes in and forbids their confessing it, or making it good or retracting it. And so one misery is piled on another; but it does not hurt them, and what with wine and gambling, and tournaments and hunting, they soon forget it all. They have no lack of debts, but they leave it to the creditors to look after them, and they find places at court or in the army for their younger sons, who inherit no estate; for the girls, thank God! so long as they belong to our Holy Church there is no lack of convents; and then for boys and girls alike there is something to hope for from aunts and other relations who die childless."

"You paint the picture in dark colours."


"But they are the true ones, and exactly represent the Baron; to be sure he had no need to keep his estates intact for a son, since his wife brought him no boys. He met her at the court of Brussels—she was a native of Parma."

"Did you know her?"

"She was dead before I entered the Padrona's service."

The two young ladies grew up without any mother. I have told you how the Baron could get into a passion even with them, but he was very fond of them, and could never make up his mind to let either of them go into a convent. Often and often he could not help feeling—at least so he used to say in conversation with my mistress—that there might be a more fitting home for a young girl of rank than his castle, where life was rough enough in all ways, and at last he sent his eldest daughter to us. My mistress could not, as a rule, endure any young girl near her, but Mistress Anna was one of our nearest relatives; and I know that she had, in fact, invited her of her own free will. I can see her now—the Signorina—as she was at sixteen; a sweeter creature, Master Wilhelm, my old eyes never saw before nor since; and yet she was never twice the same. I have seen her as soft as Flanders velvet, and then at other times she would storm and rave like one of your November storms here. She was always as lovely as a new-blown rose, and having been brought up by her mother's old waiting-woman—a native of Lugano—while the priest who taught her came from Pisa, and was famous for his knowledge of music, she spoke my language exactly like a Tuscan child, neither better nor worse, and was a proficient in music. Well! you yourself have heard her singing and her harp and lute playing; but you must know that all the ladies of the Hoogstraten family, with the single exception of my old mistress, have a particular talent for your art.

“In the summer time we used to live in that pretty country house which was pulled down before the siege by the Dutch party—and very little right they had to do so in my opinion. There we had many grand visitors riding out to us; we kept open house, and where there is a well-spread table to be found, and fair damsel, like



our Signorina, knights of every degree are sure not to be far off. Among them there was a certain very illustrious personage of middle age, the Marquis d'Avennes, whom the Padrona expressly invited there. No prince could be more attentively received ; but this was natural, as his mother was a relative of my mistress : you must know that on her mother's side she was of Norman extraction. The Marquis d'Avennes was a fine gentleman and no mistake, still he was elegant rather than manly. Before long he was madly in love with Mistress Anna, and formally proposed for her hand. The aunt favoured his suit, and the Baron simply said, 'You have got to take him.' He would hear of no refusal. And indeed other fathers in his position do not ask their daughters' opinion when a suitable husband comes forward. So the Signorina was betrothed to the Marquis, but the Padrona said very decidedly that her niece was too young to be married just yet, and she persuaded the Baron—whom she could turn and twist as the shoeing-smith manages a foal—to put off the marriage till after Easter. During the winter they would see about the preparations ; and the Marquis had to accept the condition of waiting for another six months. He rode off to France again, with the betrothal ring on his finger. His betrothed never shed the smallest tear at parting, and before the very eyes of her waiting-woman, who told me of it, she pulled off her ring and tossed it into her jewel-tray. She did not dare to oppose her father, but she did not conceal her opinion of the Marquis from her aunt, who, though she had favoured the Marquis's suit, let her talk as she pleased. There had been high words between the old lady and the young one many a time before that, and though the Padrona had had good reason to clip the wild hawk's wings, and to teach her what was becoming in a noble's

daughter, still the Signorina was justified in complaining of all the exactions by which her aunt spoilt the happiness of her young life. It grieves me, Master, to disturb the confidence of your age, but those who have kept their eyes open as they grow old, have seen men who take pleasure in tormenting their fellows—nay, to whom it is a necessity of existence. At the same time, it comforts me to believe that no one is spiteful for spite's sake; nay, I have often found that the worst impulses—how can I express it?—that the worst impulses proceed from their counterpart, the exaggerated practice of the noblest virtues of which they are, as it were, the wrong side, or the very mockery. I have seen green envy come of a noble ambition, base greed come of honest zeal, and mad hate come of tender passion. My mistress when she was young could love faithfully and truly; but she was shamefully betrayed, and now she is a prey to grudging spite, not against any particular person, but against life in general; and a noble spirit of constancy has been turned to obstinate tenacity of her evil purposes. What I mean, and how it all happened, you will understand if you hear my story to the end.

“As winter came on, I was entrusted with the task of going to Brussels and there setting up a new house on the most splendid scale; the ladies were to follow me shortly. It is just four years ago. The Duke of Alba was then living at Brussels as Viceroy, and that grand personage held my mistress in high esteem; indeed he had twice done her the honour of coming to visit her, and his chief officers were always in and out of our house. Among them was Don Luis d'Avila, a nobleman of an ancient house, who was one of the Duke's prime favourites. He, like the Marquis, was past his first youth, but he was a man of a very different stamp. He was tall, and as strong as if he had been

made of hammered steel—a gambler, and at the same time a swordsman of irresistible skill and desperately quarrelsome; still, there was something in his flashing eye and fine voice which had a mysterious charm and power over women. Dozens of adventures attributed to him were told in the servants' hall, and half of them at least were founded on facts; that came to my certain knowledge at a later time. But you would be mistaken if you were to picture to yourself this heart-breaking lady-killer as a gay and curly hero of romance whom every damsel danced forth to meet, offering him her heart and her hand. Don Luis was a grave-looking man, with a pale face and short-cut hair, who never wore any but dark clothes, and whose sword-hilt even, instead of being of gold or silver, was of some black metal. He was more like an image of death than of love. Perhaps it was that which made him irresistible, for we are all born to death, and no suitor is so sure to win as he.

“My mistress was at first not disposed to like him, but that soon changed, and by the New Year he was admitted to her little supper parties. He came whenever he was invited, but he never had a word, or a look, or a greeting, for the young mistress. It was only when the Signorina sang to them that he would go up to her and make sharp remarks as to what he did not like in her performance. He often sang himself, and then he would commonly choose the same songs as the Lady Anna sang, as if to show her how much better he could do it.

“Thus things went on till the Carnival. On Shrove Tuesday the Padrona gave a splendid party, and I, as controlling all the servants, was standing just behind the Signorina and Don Luis—the Padrona had for a long time always given him the place next to her niece—when I noticed that their hands had met under the table, and

remained clasped for some little time. This troubled me so much that I was hardly able to keep up the attention which was indispensable on such an occasion ; and next morning, when my mistress sent for me to settle accounts, I considered it my duty to remark that, notwithstanding she was betrothed to the Marquis, Don Luis d'Avila's courtship did not seem to be displeasing to the Signorina Anna. She let me speak to the end, but when I began to repeat some of the things that folks said about the Spaniard, she flew into a passion and showed me the door. A trusted servant often sees and hears more than his masters think, and I was on the best terms, too, with the Padrona's foster-sister ;—she is dead now, but at that time Susanna knew everything that concerned my mistress.

“ Things were evidently in a bad way for the Marquis, away in France ; for whenever the Padrona spoke of him it was always with a laugh which we knew well, and which boded no one any good ; still she frequently wrote to him and to his mother, and letters from Rochebrun came to us. To be sure, she and Don Luis had more than one private interview.

“ During Lent a messenger came from the Baron, with the announcement that on Easter Day he should arrive at Brussels from Haarlem, and the Marquis from Château Rochebrun ; and on Holy Thursday I was commanded to have the private chapel of the house decorated with flowers, to order post-horses, and what not. On Good Friday, on the very day of our Lord's crucifixion—I would to God that what I tell you were not the truth—on Good Friday the Signorina was dressed very early in her bridal dress ; Don Luis appeared, all in black, as proud and gloomy as ever, and before sunrise, by the light of tapers, on a cold damp morning—it is as fresh in my mind as if it were

yesterday—the Castilian was married to my Signórina. The Padrona, a Spanish officer, and myself, were the witnesses. By seven in the morning the coach was at the door, and after it was packed Don Luis gave me a little coffer to put into the carriage. I knew that chest well, and it was heavy; the Padrona was accustomed to keep gold coin in it. By Easter Day all Brussels knew that Don Luis d'Avila had carried off the beautiful Anna van Hoogstraten, having met her affianced bridegroom at Hal on his way to Brussels, on the morning of that Holy Thursday—hardly twenty-four hours before the marriage,—and run him through in a duel.

“How the Baron stormed when he arrived is a thing never to be forgotten. The Padrona refused to see him, and gave out that she was ill, but she was as well as she ever has been in these latter years of her life.”

“And could you ever account for your mistress's mysterious conduct?” asked Wilhelm.

“Yes, Master; the reasons were as clear as the day. But it is getting late—I must make my story short. Indeed I have not much to tell you as to the details, for it had all happened long before, when I was but a child. Susanna, it is true, told me a great deal that would be well worth repeating. My mistress's mother was a Chevreaux, and the Padrona herself had passed her years with an aunt on her mother's side, who spent every winter in Paris. It was in the time of his late majesty, King Francis, and, as you know, that great monarch was a gallant gentleman—a bold chevalier, of whom they used to say that he had broken as many hearts as he had lances. Well, my mistress, who at that time was young and handsome, was one of the ladies of the Court, and the king had shown her many distinguished marks of favour. But the lady knew how to guard her

honour, for she had before this found her knight in the brave Marquis d'Avennes, to whom she was faithfully devoted, and for whom she spent many a night in bitter tears; for, 'like master like man,' and though for five years the Marquis wore my lady's colours and did her the service of a true knight, his eyes and his heart wandered far and wide. However, he always returned to his allegiance, and as the sixth year was approaching, the Chevraux family began to press the Marquis to bring this game to an end, and to think of marriage. The Padrona began to make her preparations, and Susanna herself was present when she consulted the Marquis as to whether she should keep her estates and castles in Holland, or sell them. Still the wedding was put off. The Marquis had to go with his regiment into Italy, and my lady lived in constant alarm on his account, for the French fared but badly in my country at that time, and news was often months in coming. At last, however, he came home, and there he found in the Hotel Chevraux a young cousin of the Padrona's, whom he had left a child, just growing up into a lovely girl. The rest you can guess; the rose-bud Hortense pleased the Marquis infinitely better than the Dutch lady, who was now five-and-twenty. The Chevraux were noble, but desperately in debt, and the suitor, during his absence in Italy, had fallen heir to a splendid fortune from an uncle, so of course he did not ask in vain. My mistress returned to Holland. Her father challenged the Marquis, but no blood was shed, and the lord of Avennes was joined in holy matrimony to Hortense de Chevraux. It was their son who was Signorina Anna's hapless bridegroom. Do you see, Master Wilhelm? For half a lifetime she had nursed and gloated over her old grudge; to satisfy it she sold her own flesh and blood to that assassin, Don Luis, and in payment

she was able to revenge herself on the mother, by the death of her only son, for the grief she had borne for years for her sake."

The musician rolled up the handkerchief with which he had wiped his brow into a tight ball, and then asked gloomily :

"What did you ever hear of Mistress Anna after that?"

"But little," replied Belotti. "The Baron cast her out of his heart even, and always calls Henrika his only daughter. Happiness rarely seeks out those who are burdened with a father's curse, and it certainly never lighted upon her. Don Luis, they say, was degraded in military rank for some misdemeanour, and who knows what became of the poor, lovely girl! The Padrona used to send her money sometimes to Italy, through Signor Lamperi, and by way of Florence; but for the last few months I have heard nothing of her at all."

"One question more, Belotti," said Wilhelm. "After all that had happened to his elder daughter in your mistress's house, how could the Baron trust Henrika also to her care?"

"Money—a mere question of money. To keep his castle and not to sacrifice his estates, he sold his child. Yes, sir, sold her as if she had been a horse; and the Baron did not part with her for nothing, I can tell you. Drink, Master, you look but badly."

"It is nothing," said Wilhelm, "and the fresh air will do me good. Thank you for your story, Belotti."

CHAPTER XIII.

DAME VAN DER WERFF, the Burgomaster's wife, was busy on the afternoon of the sixteenth of May looking through the contents of certain cupboards and shelves. Her husband was at the town-council, but he had told her that towards evening Master Dietrich van Bronkhorst, the Prince's commissioner, the Seigneurs of Nordwyk, uncle and nephew, Van Hout the town-secretary, and some other magnates of the city and friends of freedom, were to meet at his house for a private consultation. It was Maria's part to provide a good supper, with wine and all such necessities.

This little excitement had cheered and brightened the young wife. It was delightful to have the opportunity for once of playing the hostess in something of the spirit of her early home ; and how long it was since she had enjoyed the pleasure of hearing any earnest and purposeful talk ! Visitors she had in plenty, to be sure ; all the gossips and relations of her husband's family, who were civil to her, and who came to see Barbara, constantly begged her to make herself at home with them ; but though many of them made friendly advances, and were women that she could not fail to respect for their estimable qualities, there was not one who attracted her warmer liking. Indeed, though there

was little enough of amusement or variety in her life, Maria had a real horror of their visits, and endured them only as an inevitable evil. These worthy matrons were all very much older than herself; and as they sat there, eating cakes and fruit, and drinking spiced wine, spinning, knitting, or knotting,—talking of the evil times of the siege, of nursing children and managing servants, of washing and of soap-boiling, or sitting in judgment on the numberless incomprehensible and never-quite-to-be-approved deeds which their neighbours' wives were supposed to have done, to be doing, or to be about to do,—the young wife grew sick at heart, and her lonely bedroom seemed a peaceful haven of rest.

It was only when the woes of the country were discussed, and the sacred duty of enduring a second time, if need should be, every pain and privation for freedom's sake, that she could find anything to say, and then she gladly listened to the stout-hearted dames, who, it was easy to see, were in earnest in all they said; but when mere idle chatter went on for hours at a time, it became at last positive suffering. Still, she dared not escape; she must sit it out till the last gossip had taken her leave, for Barbara had given her a friendly word of warning, when she had once or twice ventured to withdraw early, and had told her frankly that she had had some difficulty in defending her against the charge of pride, airs, and bad manners.

"Such neighbourly chat," said the widow, "is cheering, and keeps up one's spirits; and those who choose to be the first to quit a party of friendly gossips may well pray God keep them from being ill spoken of behind their backs."

There was one woman in Leyden after Maria's own heart,—this was the wife of Van Hout; but she was very

rarely to be seen, for though she looked delicate and refined, she had to work early and late to keep her children and her house in order, for times were not easy with the Town-clerk.

However, on this May day Maria went with a lighter step and heart than for many a day past, first to the side-board shelves where the table-crockery was arranged, and then to the cupboard where their silver-plate was kept : and all the best of their household possessions were soon in their place, bright and shining, with not a speck of dust, on white linen napkins trimmed with lace. She picked out what she needed, but a great deal of the pewter, glass, and earthenware was not at all what she liked ; for it did not match, or had been replaced at hap-hazard, and in many articles there were dents, bends, or cracks.

When her mother had begun to buy her daughter's household chattels, Peter had expressed a wish that in these hard times the money might be laid by, and nothing bought that was not really necessary ; his house, he said, was well supplied with every kind of furniture, and he would think it a sin to spend money on even a plate. And in point of fact there was nothing wanting on the shelves or in the cupboards, only she had not chosen it and brought it home herself—it was hers, no doubt, and yet it was not her very own ; and the worst of it was, that her eyes, accustomed to prettier and better things, could not be satisfied with these dull, scratched pewter plates, these coarsely and gaudily painted jugs, mugs, and cups. Even the glasses were too thick, and not to her mind ; and as she looked them through, and selected what was necessary, she could not help thinking of other young married women, her friends, who, with eyes glistening with pride and satisfaction, had displayed their shining new

pewter and glass as if each piece were an elaborate and precious work of art. However, with what she had under her hand, she could contrive to lay her table prettily and neatly.

Before dinner she had gone with Adrian to their garden on the town wall, and cut some flowers, and had gathered a bunch of tall grasses in the fields outside the gates. These gifts of the spring she had arranged with care in vases, mingling them with peacock's feathers, and she was pleased to see that even the clumsiest jar acquired a graceful aspect when she had wreathed it with creepers. Adrian looked on in astonishment; it would not have surprised him if under her hand the dingy dining-room had turned to a hall of crystal and mother-of-pearl.

Just as she had done laying the table Peter came in for a minute. Before his guests came he was going to ride out to the Fort at Valkenburg, with the Captain Allertssohn, Janus Dousa, and some others, to inspect the redoubts. As he passed through the dining-room he waved his hand to his wife, and, just glancing at the table, he said :

"All that set-out was quite unnecessary, and above all the flowers. We are to meet for grave discussion, and you have laid a wedding-supper." But then, seeing Maria cast down her eyes, he added kindly : "But have it so—I do not care," and quitted the room.

Maria stood undecided before her handiwork. Bitter feelings were rising up in her once more, and she had put out her hand to disarrange one particularly pretty nosegay, when Adrian looked up at her with wide eyes, and said in an imploring tone :

"No, mother, do not—you must not ; it looks so sweet and pretty."

Maria smiled, and stroked the lad's curly head, then

she took two cakes out of a dish and gave them to him.

"There," she said, "one for you and the other for Liesa ; I will leave the flowers as they are."

Adrian ran off with the sweetmeats, while she looked at the table once more, and thought to herself :

"Peter never wants anything but just what is necessary, but that cannot be everything in the world, or God would have made all birds with gray feathers."

She went to help Barbara in the kitchen, and when all was done went into her own room. There she rearranged her hair, put a new starched ruff round her throat, and a neatly-plaited lace tucker in the front of her bodice. Still, she kept on her everyday dress, since her husband did not wish that the meeting should have any aspect of festivity. Just as she was putting the last gold pin into her hair, and was wondering whether Councillor van Bronkhorst—as representing the Prince of Orange—or the venerable Baron of Nordwyk should fill the place of honour at table, Truitje knocked at her door, and told her that Doctor Bontius wanted to speak to the master on business of pressing importance. The maid had informed the Doctor that her master had gone out riding, but he would not be put off, and had said that then he would speak with the mistress.

Maria hastened to her husband's study ; the physician seemed in a great hurry. Instead of any mere formal greeting, he simply lifted the gold knob of his cane to the brim of his hat—without which he never was seen, even by the side of a sick-bed—and asked shortly and hastily :

"When will Master Peter return ?"

"In about an hour," said Maria. "Take a seat, Doctor."

"Some other time—I cannot wait so long for your husband. But, after all, you might come with me without waiting for his consent."

"No doubt; but we are expecting company."

"Very true; if I find time I will come in again; but the gentlemen can get on without me, while you are absolutely indispensable to the poor creature I want you to come to."

"But I do not in the least know of whom you are speaking."

"No? Well, to a person who is sick and suffering, and that is enough for you to know at present."

"And you think I could——"

"You could, more than you have any idea of. Barbara reigns in the kitchen, and besides, you ought to give succour to the sick."

"But, Doctor——"

"Make haste, I must beg of you, for my time is short. Will you be of use—yes or no?"

The door into the dining-room stood open; Maria glanced round at the neatly-spread table, and all the pleasure she had hoped for this evening recurred to her mind. But as the physician turned to go, she held him back and said:

"I will come."

Maria knew the ways of this abrupt but perfectly unselfish and learned man. Without waiting for his answer, she ran to fetch her kerchief, and led the way downstairs. As they passed the kitchen the Doctor called out to Barbara:

"Tell Master Peter that I have carried off his wife to nurse young Mistress van Hoogstraten in the Nobel Straat."

Maria could hardly keep up with the Doctor's hasty strides, and found it difficult to understand what he said, as he told her in fragmentary sentences that the whole "brood of Glippers"—the Hoogstratens—had left the town; that the old aunt was dead; that all the servants had fled for fear of the plague, of which there was not the smallest danger; and that Henrika was left lying there wholly deserted. She had had a severe attack of fever, but now for some days had been steadily mending.

"Misfortune," said he, "has made itself at home in the Glippers' nest. The Reaper conferred a boon on the old woman by carrying her off. The French waiting-woman, a feeble creature, held out bravely; but after sitting up a few nights she broke down, and would have been taken to Saint Katharine's Hospital, but the old Italian steward, who is not a bad man, set his face against it, and had her taken to the house of a Catholic washerwoman, where he went too, to take care of her. No one is left in the deserted house to attend to the young lady but Sister Gonzaga, a good little nun, one of the three sisters who are allowed to remain as inmates of the old cloister near your house; but the worthy old woman, as a crowning misfortune, this morning, while heating a bath, scalded her hand. The Roman Catholic priest has remained unharmed and faithful at his post; but what can he do in nursing a sick girl? You can see now why I came to fetch you. You cannot, and ought not, to devote yourself permanently to nursing a stranger; but if this young girl is to continue to improve without a drawback, she must for the present see some face about her to which she may attach herself, and God has blessed you with just such an one. Let the sick girl see you and look at you; talk to her, and if you are the woman I take you for—— But here we are at our journey's end."

The air in the dimly-lighted hall of the Hoogstratens was heavy with a strong musky odour. The Doctor had announced the old lady's death at the town-hall as soon as it had taken place, so an armed guard marched up and down the hall to keep watch, and he informed the Doctor that the Town-clerk, Van Hout, had already been to the house with his subordinates, and had sealed up everything.

As they went up the stairs, Maria started and laid her hand on her companion's arm, for through an open door on the first floor she saw, in the dim light, a shape, an ill-defined form, moving about with strange gestures—now here, now there, first rising, and then stooping—and it was with an ill-assured voice that she inquired of the Doctor, as she pointed to it with her finger :

“What is that?”

The Doctor, like her, had stood still, and seeing the strange form to which she pointed, he himself started back a step. But the cool-headed man at once perceived the true nature of the bogey form, and going forward, he called out, smiling :

“What in the world are you doing there on the ground, Father Damianus?”

“I am scouring the boards,” said the priest coolly.

“What will you do next?” said the Doctor indignantly. “You are too good for housemaid's work, reverend Father ; besides, there is money enough in this house without any owner, and to-morrow we can find as many scrubbers as we can want.”

“But not to-day, Doctor, and the young lady positively cannot remain any longer in the room upstairs. You yourself prescribed sleep, and Sister Gonzaga tells me that there, with the body in the very next room, she will not close her eyes.”

"Then the lawyer's servants might have carried bed and all, into the old lady's sitting-room—that is a parlor."

"But that was sealed up, and so were all the good rooms on this floor. The people from the town were very obliging, and they inquired for women to scrub, but the poor creatures are frightened at the plague."

"That sort of panic grows like bindweed," said the Doctor; "no one sows it, and when once it has taken root, who can eradicate it?"

"Not you nor I," answered the priest. "Well, then the young lady must be brought into this room; but she looked dreadfully uncomfortable, so I set to work at once to clean it. It will be the better for the invalid, and exercise will do me no harm."

As he spoke the priest rose, and noticing Maria went on:

"You have brought a new nurse for her? That is well. Sister Gonzaga needs no praise of mine, for you know her well; but I am quite sure that Mistress Henrika cannot endure her much longer about her person; and so, as I am concerned, as soon as the funeral is over I will quit this house."

"You have indeed done your part; but what do you mean with regard to Sister Gonzaga?" said the Doctor angrily. "She, poor old thing, even with her maimed hand, is far better than—— What can have happened?"

The priest came close up to him, and with a hasty glance at the newcomer he whispered:

"But she speaks dreadfully through her nose, and the young mistress told me that she could not bear to hear her talk—that I was to keep her out of the way."

Doctor Bontius stood thoughtful for a moment, and then he said :

"There are eyes which cannot endure any bright light, and so there may likewise be certain tones which are intolerable to an over-excited ear. Now, Dame, you have been kept waiting too long. Please to come with me."

It was by this time dark ; the curtains had been drawn in the sick-room, and a little lamp burning behind a screen shed but a feeble light. The Doctor went up to the bed, felt Henrika's pulse, prepared her in a few words to see the stranger he had brought with him, and then took the lamp to see how his patient was looking. Maria saw a pale, finely-cut face, out of which gazed a pair of dark eyes, that looked all the larger and brighter from contrast with the sick girl's hollow cheeks and pinched features. As the old Sister replaced the lamp behind the shade, the Doctor said :

"Very good indeed. Now, Sister Gonzaga, go and lie down, and change the bandage on your hand," and he beckoned to Dame Maria to come nearer. Henrika's face touched Maria strangely. She was handsome, no doubt, but the large eyes and firmly-closed lips struck the young woman as singular rather than attractive. However, she obeyed the physician's orders, went up to the bedside, and said kindly that she had been glad to come to keep her company for a little while, and do anything she might wish. Henrika started up in bed :

"That is well !" she exclaimed, with a deep breath of relief. "Thank you, Doctor ; a human voice again at last ! If you wish to please me, Dame van der Werff, you have only to go on talking to me—never mind what about. Please to come and sit down here. What with Sister Gonzaga's nursing, your voice, and the Doctor's—what

shall I call it?—the Doctor's encouragement, I shall find no difficulty in being nursed into sound health again."

"Very good, very good!" murmured the leech. "Our worthy Gonzaga's burns are not serious, and she will remain with you; but by-and-by, when it is time for you to go to sleep, you shall be carried away from here. If you, Dame Maria, can stay here for an hour, that will be enough for to-day. I will go to your house and send the man to fetch you with a lantern."

When the two women were left alone, Maria said:

"You seem to care very much about the tone of a voice; I do so myself, indeed more than I ought. But then I have never gone through a very bad illness——"

"This is the first I have ever had," replied Henrika. "But now I know how it feels to be obliged to submit to whatever is done to you, whether you like it or not, and to feel twice as acutely everything that one most loathes. It is better to die than to live suffering."

"Your aunt is dead," said Maria in sympathetic tones.

"Yes, early this morning. We had little in common but the tie of blood."

"Are your parents yet alive?"

"Only my father; but why do you ask?"

"He will be glad to hear of your recovery. Doctor Bontius says you will get perfectly well."

"I have no doubt of it," said Henrika confidently; and then she went on in a low voice to herself, not heeding Maria, "There is one pleasant thing to look forward to. When I am well again I can—— Do you love music?"

"Yes, sweet Mistress."

"And not for a pastime merely, but because you feel that you cannot live without it?"

"You must keep quiet, Mistress. Music! Yes, I

believe my life would be much sadder than it is without it."

"Do you sing?"

"I seldom have the opportunity here, but as a girl, in Delft, we used to sing every day."

"You took the first, of course?"

"Yes, Mistress."

"Oh! leave out Mistress, and call me Henrika."

"With all my heart, if you will agree to call me Maria, or at any rate, Dame Maria."

"I will try. Do not you think we might practise a good many pieces together?"

Just now Sister Gonzaga came into the room, and announced that the wife of the Receiver-General, Cornelius van Nierop, had come to inquire whether she could do the sick lady any pleasure or service.

"What does she mean?" said Henrika pettishly; "I do not know the woman."

"She is the mother of Wilhelm the organist," the young woman explained.


"Oh!" cried the girl. "May I have her in, Maria?" But Maria shook her head, and answered decidedly, "No, Mistress Henrika; more than one visitor at present would not be good for you, and besides——"

"Well!"

"She is a kind, true-hearted woman, but I am afraid her rough ways and heavy step and loud voice would do you no good. Let me go and ask her what she has come for."

"Well, thank her kindly, and tell her to carry my remembrances to her son. I am not generally so susceptible——but I see you understand me, and such strong food, I believe, would hardly be good for me yet."

Maria had executed her commission, and had been



sitting for some time longer with Henrika, when Dame van Hout was announced ; her husband, who had been present when the seals were put on the doors and drawers in the house of the dead, had told her of the forlorn position of the sick girl, and she had come to see in what way she might perhaps be of use to her.

"You might see her, no doubt," said Maria, "for you could not fail to like her ; but then, again, you have had enough for to-day. Now, try to sleep. I will go home with the Town-clerk's wife, and I will come again to-morrow, and, if you would like it——"

"Come, oh yes, come !" cried the girl. "But you had something else to say?"

"I would make so bold, Mistress Henrika ; you ought not to remain in this dismal house ; there is room and to spare in ours. Be our guest till the Baron, your father ——"

"Oh yes ! take me with you," cried the convalescent, and her eyes glistened with eager tears ; "take me away from this, only take me away—I will thank you as long as I live !"

CHAPTER XIV.

It was many weeks since Maria had run upstairs with so joyful a step. She could almost have sung for joy, but she was still a little uneasy, for perhaps her husband might not quite approve of her freedom in asking a stranger to his house, still more one who was sick, and an adherent of the Spaniards to boot.

As she passed the dining-room door, she heard the voices of the men talking within. Peter was now speaking ; his rich, deep tones fell on her ear, and she said to herself that Henrika would like to hear them. In a few minutes she entered the room to welcome her husband's guests, who were also her own. Happy excitement, and her hasty walk in the still, mild air of the May evening following a warm day, had coloured her cheeks ; and as she went into the room with a modest and respectful courtesy, through which her pleasure at receiving such worthy guests was very apparent, she looked so sweet and gracious a creature that none of the party could fail to be attracted by her. The elder Van der Does slapped Peter on the shoulder, and then clapped his hands together, as much as to say, "You have chosen well, my friend ;" and Janus, the younger, gaily whispered to Van Hout, who, like himself, was a Latin scholar :

"Oculi sunt in amore duces."

Captain Allertssohn started to his feet and raised his hand in military salute ; while Van Bronkhorst, the Prince's representative, expressed his sentiments in a courtly bow ; Doctor Bontius smiled with the satisfied look of a man who has succeeded in a bold stroke of business ; and Peter, proud and pleased, tried to attract his wife's attention to himself. In this, however, he could not succeed, for Maria, perceiving herself to be the centre of so much observation, with a heightened blush cast down her eyes, while she said with more decision than could have been expected from her bashful demeanour :

"You are heartily welcome, gentlemen ; my greeting comes late, but I assure you it is from no lack of goodwill that I did not offer it earlier."

"I can testify to that," said Doctor Bontius, rising and shaking Maria's hand more warmly than he had ever done before. Then, nodding to Peter, he said to the assembled party :

"You will give the Burgomaster leave of absence for a minute or two ?"

He withdrew with the couple, and no sooner were they outside the door than he exclaimed :

"You have invited another guest into your house, Dame van der Werff ! Not another drop of malmsey will I drink if I have guessed wrongly."

"How did you know that ?" said Maria gaily.

"I can read it in your face."

"And the young lady shall be heartily welcome for my part," added Peter.

"How do you know anything about it ?" asked Maria.

"Well, the Doctor did not keep his expectations hidden under a bushel."

"It is quite true ; she is very ready to come to us, and to-morrow——"

"To-morrow ! I will have her brought here this very evening," said Van der Werff.

"This evening ! nay, it is too late ; by this time perhaps she is asleep ; these gentlemen are here, and our spare bed——" Maria broke off, looking doubtfully and disapprovingly first at the Doctor and then at her husband.

"Make yourself easy, child," said Peter. "The Doctor has already ordered a covered litter from the hospital ; Jan and a town-sergeant will carry it ; and Barbara, who has finished her work in the kitchen, is now actually arranging her own room to receive the sick girl."

"Besides," added the leech, "when she is here, she will probably be able to sleep again. And her high-mightiness will infinitely prefer to be carried through the streets in the dark, and unrecognised."

"Yes, yes," said Maria, disappointed, "that is true, no doubt ; but I had intended—— It is not well to be in too great a hurry about anything."

"But you are glad to have Mistress Henrika as our guest?" asked Peter.

"To be sure I am."

"Then we will take no half measures, but do all we can for her, and do it at once. There is Barbara beckoning you ; the litter is come, Doctor ; go and lead the procession, and God be with you ; but do not let us have to wait for you too long."

The Burgomaster returned to his friends, and De Bont went downstairs. Maria followed him ; in the hall he laid his hand on her arm, and asked her :

"Now, would you like me to tell you once more what I think of you ?"

"No!" said the young woman in a half-joking tone, through which, however, the disappointment she felt could be detected. "No! you have taught me that you are a man quite capable of marring some of my greatest pleasures."

"I procure you others in their place," said the physician, laughing, as he went down the steps.

The Doctor was one of Van der Werff's oldest friends, and he had found much to object to in the Burgomaster's marriage with a woman so much younger than himself, and in such evil times as these; but on this occasion he had been fully satisfied with the Burgomaster's choice.

Maria returned to her guests, whose glasses she filled, and pledged them in wine, and she then went to her sister-in-law's room to help to arrange everything for the best, for the expected visitor. She did so with a good will, but still she felt as if she could have set to work with greater satisfaction early next morning.

Barbara's large and airy room looked out on the courtyard. Nothing could there be heard of the conversation in the dining-room, and yet the discussion was by no means devoid of excitement among men who, though the same purpose animated them all, were often disagreed as to the best ways and means of achieving a happy issue. There they sat, those brave sons of a narrow country, the stalwart leaders of a commonwealth, poor alike in numbers and in means of defence, but which had taken upon itself to defy the mightiest empire and the most powerful armies of that age. They knew full well that the clouds which for weeks had lowered in the distance were gathering faster and faster, and packing as they rose to hurl a fearful tempest upon Leyden. Indeed, Van der Werff had invited his colleagues expressly because a letter from the Prince, addressed to himself

and to Van Bronkhorst, contained the news that King Philip's regent had communicated to the Maestro del Campo Valdez His Majesty's commands that Leyden should be a second time invested, and reduced to subjection. They knew that William of Orange could not collect an army in less than a month at soonest, and bring it up to divert the besieging forces, or to relieve the town ; they had already learnt how little they could count on the Queen of England and the Protestant Princes of Germany, and the appalling fate of the neighbouring town of Haarlem—a stronger place than Leyden—rose as a ghastly warning before their eyes. Still, they were conscious of suffering in a noble cause ; they trusted confidently in the Prince's good faith, heroism, and statecraft ; they were ready to die rather than to sell themselves body and soul to the Spanish tyrant. Their faith too was strong and deep in the justice of God, and each felt a cheerful confidence in his own staunch manliness.

And verily, the men who sat round that table, which a woman's hand had graciously decked with flowers, who proved so valiant in emptying the capacious glasses with heavy knobs on their ringed stems, that jar after jar of Van der Werff's malmsey and Rhine-wine came up from the cellar-depths,—the men who hewed breaches in the towering pastries and substantial joints, more juicy and nutritious than any other pastures can produce,—these men did not look as if pale terror had brought them together.

A hat is the badge of liberty, and a free man keeps his hat on ; so the Burgomaster's guests sat at table with their heads covered ; and how becoming to the venerable Lord of Nordwyk, with his hale, fresh face, and to the shrewd and thoughtful countenance of his nephew, Janus Dousa, were their tall, plaited bonnets of dark-red velvet, with a

thick curled feather trimming ; how handsome Jan van Duivenvoorde, the young Seigneur of Warmond, looked with his waving locks beneath his broad-brimmed hat, in which there waved a blue and orange ostrich plume—the colours of the Prince ! How full of health and of character were the faces collected round the table ! Hardly one was devoid of a fresh, bright colour ; and robust vitality, clear good sense, immovable resolve, and iron tenacity, spoke in many a blue eye. Even the members of the Council, in their black dress, and who were well suited in their plaited ruffs, or their smooth white neckcloths, did not look as if the dust of archives had dulled their vigour ; while the moustache of one, and the square or flowing beard of another, gave them a manly aspect. Each was cheerfully ready to sacrifice himself and all he owned for a supreme moral gain, and yet each looked as though his foothold on life were steadfast and sure ; there was no sign of over-exaltation in those wise and gravely thoughtful faces ; a trace of it perhaps sparkled in the eyes of the young Lord of Warmond, and Janus Dousa's gaze now and then had an absorbed look, as if turned inward to seek some hidden vein of thought, and in such moments his sharply-cut but irregular features acquired a singular charm.

The ponderous and over-stout person of Van Bronkhorst usurped a large space ; his body was indeed unwieldy to move, but in his round closely-cropped head sparkled a pair of prominent eyes, which announced indomitable obstinacy of purpose.

The brightly-lighted table round which such a noble handful had met offered a gay and handsome show. The yellow buff jerkins worn by the Baron van Warmond, by Mulder the Colonel, and by Allertssohn, the Captain of the town forces, and the gay hues of the silk scarfs they tied

across them, with the bright red coat of brave Dirk Smaling, stood out in pleasing contrast to the black garments of Parson Verstroot, of the Burgomaster himself, of the Town-clerk, and of their fellow-councillors. The purple suit of the Prince's envoy, and the dark tints of the fur-trimmed cloaks worn by the Seigneurs of Nordwyk and Montfoort blended agreeably and harmoniously with the lighter and darker hues. All that was sad or gloomy seemed banished far enough from this motley-coloured and animated assembly; their speech was free and eager, and their voices were steady and deep.

But the peril was already at their gates. Every day might bring the Spaniards down upon Leyden. Many preparations had already been made; the outworks of Alfen and the sluices of Gouda were defended by their English allies; the Fort of Valkenburg had been strengthened and garrisoned by British soldiers; the town forces, the municipal watch, and the volunteers, were all efficiently drilled. They did not wish to have any foreign troops inside the town walls, for during the last siege they had been more of a burden than a help, and a storming of the town, protected as it was by moat, ramparts, and bastions, was hardly to be feared.

What at this moment agitated the assembly most was a report brought to them by the Town-clerk. The wealthy Baersdorp, one of the four Burgomasters of the town, and the greatest corn-dealer in Leyden, had undertaken to purchase for the authorities a very considerable quantity of bread-stuffs. Several ship-loads of wheat and rye had been delivered by him on the previous day, but a quarter of the supplies ordered of him was still lacking. He frankly confessed that he had given no definite and final order for them, because he was expecting a fall in the price of

corn in the Rotterdam and Amsterdam markets, the prospects of the harvest being particularly favourable; thinking, too, there would still be some weeks to spare before the town was again invaded.

Van Hout was furious, but two of the four Burgomasters defended their colleague Baersdorp. The old Seigneur of Nordwyk agreed with the Town-clerk.

"With all due respect to your office, Master Peter," he exclaimed, "your three colleagues are of that kind of friends to whom an open foe is far preferable."

"The Seigneur of Noyelles," interrupted Mulder, "wrote in his time to the Prince himself a good and true word when he said that such men were only fit for the gallows."

"And the gallows for them," added Allertssohn, "so long as hempen rope and a traitor's neck are made for each other."

"Traitors! nay," said Van der Werff decidedly. "Call them dastardly if you will,—say they are greedy and mean,—but none of them is a Judas."

"You are right, Master Peter, for that they are not, and perhaps even cowardice has no part in their conduct," said the elder Van der Does. "Any one who has eyes to see and ears to hear, knows how the feeling tends among the men of the old city families, who were held over the font with the idea that they must be future councillors; and I am not speaking of the Leyden men alone, but of those of Delft and Gouda, of Rotterdam and Dortrecht. Sixty out of every hundred bend with a good grace to Spanish tyranny, renouncing even their liberty of conscience, so long as their personal freedom and rights are guaranteed to them. Whether in church sermons are preached or masses chanted,—whether they are governed by a Dutchman or a Spaniard,—

are secondary considerations. Of course, I except those who are present ; you, my masters, would not be here if you were like-minded with those of whom I speak."

"Thank you for that exception," said Dirk Smaling ; "but, with all respect for your judgment, you have painted them with dark colours. May I ask you, now, does not the nobility cling to its rights and liberties ?"

"Undoubtedly, Master Dirk, though they commonly date from an earlier time than yours," answered the other. "But, you see, the noble needs a sovereign ; he is an extinct star when the sun that lends him light does not shine upon him. I, and all the nobles who with me have sworn allegiance to the Prince of Orange, feel that he and none other must be our central sun—he who is one of us, who knows us, loves us, and understands us ; not Philip, who knows nothing of our minds and manners, who is a stranger in the land, and who abhors us. We will uphold William with life and land, for, as I have said, we need a sun—that is to say, a monarch. But the towns think that they can shine by their own light, and are in themselves stars to the world. They feel, no doubt, that in these evil days of warfare they need a leader, and that they can find none better, wiser, or more trustworthy than Orange ; but if it should come to pass—and God grant it may—that the Spanish yoke should be broken, then even the great William's rule will seem burdensome and oppressive, for they themselves too greatly relish the game of governing. To put it shortly, the towns endure a monarch, the nobles gather round him and demand him. No good issue can come of it until nobles, citizens, and peasants alike learn to yield to him, and combine to fight under his captaincy for the chief blessings of life."

"Very true," said Van Hout. "The well-affected

nobles, both here and in the other towns, may set the example; but the people—the poor and labouring population—who knew well enough, too, what it must cost them,—who have, thank God, not yet lost their strong love for what you call the chief blessings of life,—they only ask to be and to remain Dutch; they curse the Spanish butchers with genuine hatred; they insist on serving God as their spirit prompts them, and on believing what their heart dictates; they call the Prince their Father William. Wait a while. As soon as necessity presses, the poor and humble will stand firm, when the great and wealthy tremble and fall away, and deny the good cause.”

“They are to be trusted,” said Van der Werf—“implicitly trusted.”

“And knowing them as I do,” cried Van Hout, “come what may, we shall tide through it by God’s help.”

Janus Dousa sat looking into his glass. Now, throwing his head back, he said with a hasty movement of his hand:

“It is strange that these men, who fight a hand-to-hand battle with life, and whose uneducated minds move only in the groove traced by each day’s needs, are the readiest to sacrifice their little all for spiritual blessings.”

“True,” said the minister, “‘Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ It is wonderful to see how the poor and unlearned are able to value the blessings of faith, freedom, and fatherland more highly than the vain goods of this world—the golden calf round which the nations crowd to worship.”

“Well, the men of my standing are not being flattered this evening,” said Dirk Smaling, “but I would ask you to consider this point in our favour. We are playing a dangerous game for high stakes; and those who possess most put the lion’s share into the pool.”

"Not so," interrupted Van Hout. "The highest stake that any of us can risk on the throw of the dice is life, and that is equally dear to both rich and poor. Those are who will hesitate to risk it—I will wager that I know them. They have no simple motto or humble sign over their door, but a haughty coat of arms. Wait a little while and we shall see."

"Wait and we shall see," said Van der Werff; "but at this moment there are more pressing things to attend to. The day after to-morrow is Ascension Day, and the great yearly fair will begin. Yesterday and the day before, more than one stranger with merchandise and pedlar with his pack passed through our gates. Now, shall we allow the booths to be erected, or put off the fair till another time? If the enemy sweeps down upon us, there will be terrible confusion, and we may perhaps throw a valuable booty into his hands. I ask your opinion, masters all."

"We ought to protect the traders, and put off the fair," said Dirk van Montfoort.

"Nay, my lord," said Van Hout, "for if we forbid it, we deprive the smaller dealers of their little profits, and so damp their spirits beforehand."

"Let them have their festival," cried Janus Dousa. "We ought not to pay the coming misery the compliment of clouding the happy present by anticipating it. If you want to be wise, follow the counsels of my Horace."

"'Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof,' saith the Scripture," added the parson; and Allertssohn exclaimed:

"By heaven, yes! my soldiers and the town-watch and militia must have their procession round the town. In full glory of arms and armour too, when bright eyes smile at them, old folks greet them, and children shout and run in


front of them—that is when a soldier first learns to pride himself on the trade of arms.”

So it was decided to let the yearly market take place.

While these and other questions were being decided in earnest conclave, Henrika had been comfortably and affectionately installed in Barbara's pretty room. When she was asleep, Maria once more went to see her guests; but she did not now join them at table, for by this time their faces were heated, and they no longer spoke in order, each in his turn, but each addressed the other confusedly, saying just what came first. Van der Werff was talking to Van Hout and the envoy as to the corn to be brought into the town; Janus Dousa and the Seigneur of Warmond were discussing a poem which Van Hout had recited at the last meeting of the literary society of the Rederyke; the elder Van der Does was disputing with the minister over the new church practices; and the brawny Captain—in front of whom stood a vast drinking-horn that he had drained to the last drop—had leaned his forehead on Mulder's shoulder, and, as was his custom when wine had made him happy, shed a flood of bitter tears.

CHAPTER XV.

ON the following day, after the sitting of the council, Burgomaster van der Werff, Mr. Secretary van Hout, and a notary with two clerks, proceeded to the house in the Nobel Straat, to settle matters as to the property of old Mistress van Hoogstraten. The elders of the town had decided to confiscate the deserted dwelling of the traitorous Glippers, and to apply the wealth it might contain to the uses of the common cause. The old lady's antagonistic sentiments were well known, and as her nearest relatives, the Barons van Hoogstraten and Matenesse van Wibisma, had been outlawed from Leyden, the town had every right to administer the inheritance. It was quite to be expected that none but acknowledged Glippers would be mentioned in the will of the deceased, and if this should prove to be the case, the municipality would use the capital and estates, spending the interest until such time as the runagates might be brought to a better mind, and the authorities feel justified by their conduct in opening the city gates to them once more. Such of them as, even then, persisted in adhering to the Spaniards, and setting themselves against the cause of liberty, would sacrifice their share of the inheritance to the town for ever. Such a procedure was nothing new, and King Philip had learnt to



practise it to his own benefit ; for not only had the property of innumerable innocent and expatriated citizens, or voluntary exiles for the new form of faith, been confiscated to his advantage, but even the possessions of many a good Catholic patriot. To men who had so long suffered as the anvil, it was a pleasant change to play the hammer ; and if they did not always then show themselves moderate and dignified, they had the excuse of having suffered treatment a hundred times more rigorous and cruel at the hands of the Spaniards. It would have been unchristian to repay evil with equal evil ; but hard blows were dealt, though only in return, it is true, for more deadly strokes, and the Glippers were not wantonly murdered.

At the door of the house of death the members of the town-council found Wilhelm Corneliussohn and his mother, who had come once more to offer Henrika a friendly reception and shelter in their home. The worthy wife of the Receiver-General, who at first had refused to extend any neighbourly love to the Glipper's daughter, now was much aggrieved, when she had come on pious acts intent, to have missed the opportunity, and expressed her feelings to that effect in her own rough fashion.

In the hall stood Belotti, no longer in the splendour of silk hose and the satin-bordered cloth doublet of the house-steward, but in the plain dark dress of a citizen. He had told the musician and Peter that for the present he should remain in Leyden, as he could not reconcile it to his conscience to desert the sick waiting-woman Denise at such a pinch ; but other things contributed to detain him, and above all—though he could not bear to confess it—the feeling, confirmed by the habits of years, of inseparable connection with the house of Hoogstraten. That his account-books were in good order, the *chargé d'affaires* had

duly certified, and had readily paid him his dues. His savings were safely laid out, and as he had always been temperate, and had never touched the interest, it had accumulated with the capital to a handsome round sum. Nothing really held him to Leyden, but he felt he could not quit it till all had been finally wound up in the house over which he had ruled so long.

Every day he had inquired after the health of the two ladies, and after the death of his mistress, although Denise was by this time mending, he lingered in Leyden, regarding it as his duty to pay her the last honours at her funeral.

The town officials were well pleased to find Belotti on the spot. The notary had managed his little money matters for him for some time, and esteemed him as a thoroughly honest man; and he now desired him to serve as a guide to himself and his fellow officials. It was first of all necessary that they should find the old lady's will; it was certain that such a document must exist, for it had been in the notary's keeping up to the day following Henrika's first attack of fever, when the old lady, wishing to make some alterations in it, had asked for it back. He could give no information as to its contents, for it was not himself but his senior, who was dead, and whose business he had inherited, who had drawn up the document.

The steward led the gentlemen first through the dwelling-rooms, and his mistress's little sitting-room, but though the desks, chests, and cupboards were thoroughly searched, and they came upon letters, money, and valuables in numerous drawers and boxes, no will was found.

The men of law were of opinion that it might have been laid by in some secret drawer, and sent one of the clerks off to fetch a locksmith. Belotti let him go, but he was listening attentively the while to the low chant which fell

upon his ear from his mistress's bedroom, where her body was still lying. That, he knew, was the place where the will was most likely to be found, but he was, above all, anxious to have the priests undisturbed in their office of prayer for his dead mistress. As soon as all was silent again he bade the gentlemen follow him.

The lofty room with a coved ceiling into which he led them was full of incense. At the farther end of it stood a large bedstead, above which a sort of tent of embroidered silk curtains rose as high as the ceiling; in the middle of the room was the bier on which lay the deceased lady, her face covered with a linen handkerchief trimmed with lace. Her slender but still plump hands were folded on her breast; between them was a much-worn rosary. A handsome coverlid concealed all her person, and on the middle of it lay a crucifix, finely carved in ivory.

The visitors bowed in silence before the corpse as they and Belotti went closer, but at the sight of his Padrona's hands, so long familiar to him, the poor old man's heart seemed to burst in a convulsive sob. He knelt down by the bier and pressed his lips to the cold white fingers, while a warm tear—the only tear shed over this woman's death—fell on the hands now for ever clenched and still. The Burgomaster and his companions did not disturb him, but left him to press his brow to the wooden coffin, and put up a short and silent prayer. When he had risen, and when an elderly priest in canonicals had left the room, Father Damianus signed to an acolyte who was standing with him in the background, and they, with Belotti's help, laid the lid upon the coffin. Then the priest said, turning to Van der Werff:

"We propose to carry the mistress to her grave at midnight, so that no scandal may arise."

"That is well," replied the Burgomaster. "And, come what may, you may be sure we shall not expel you from the town. If, indeed, you prefer to join the Spaniards —"

But Damianus shook his head :

"No, Master," he interrupted decidedly ; "I was born in Utrecht, and I pray earnestly for the freedom of Holland."

"Good, good !" cried the Town-clerk. "That is a good word—an admirable word. Give me your hand, Master Priest."

"With all my heart ; and so long as your motto '*Hæc libertatis ergo*' does not degenerate into '*Hæc religionis ergo*,' I shall never change that word."

"A free country, and liberty of conscience for all, including you and yours," said the Burgomaster,—“that is what we aim at. Doctor Bontius has spoken of you to me, reverend sir ; you cared bravely for the dead who lies here. Bury her after the manner of your Church ; we have come to administer the worldly possessions she has left behind her. This little coffer perhaps contains her will."

"No, Master," replied the priest. "When she first fell ill she opened the sealed document in my presence, and now and then, as she felt better, added a few lines to it. An hour before she died she desired that the notary should be fetched, but before it could be done she was gone. I could not stay constantly with the corpse, so I laid the deed in the linen chest ; here is the key."

The will was at once found. The Burgomaster calmly opened it and read it aloud, while the notary and the town-clerk looked over his shoulder. The property was to be divided between certain churches and convents—in which masses were to be said for the soul of the testatrix,—and

her nearest relatives ; Belotti and Denise were remembered with small legacies.

"As it happens," cried Van Hout, "this document is a mere sheet of waste-paper."

"It is of no value whatever," added the notary, "since it was removed from my keeping for the declared purpose of being altered and nullified. But turn the sheet over, Master Peter. Here, on the back, there is a great deal more to read."

The task before them was not a light one, for the sick woman had scribbled short notes all over the blank side of the paper, above and below, here and there, memoranda, as it seemed, for the drawing up of a fresh will. Quite at the top her trembling hand had drawn a cross, and beneath it the words, "Pray for us ! Our holy Church is all in all."

Lower down was written, "Nico. I like the lad. The castle on the *Dunes*. Ten thousand gold guilder in money. To be settled on him alone. His father is not to touch it. Explain clearly why he is disinherited. Van Vliet of Haarlem was the man whose daughter my cousin had privately married and deserted, under miserable pretences, to marry another woman. Though he may have forgotten it, it remains in my memory, and I wish him joy of it. Nico must mark it well ; false love is poison. It has spoilt my life—spoilt it utterly."

The word "spoilt" was written again and again, many times, and the last time, to finish the sentence, the sick woman had flourished her pen round it in curls and spirals. Down the right margin of the sheet were a series of short memoranda.

"Anna, ten thousand guilder. Settled on her, or they will fall into the hand of that bird of prey d'Avila.

"Henrika three times as much. Her father may pay it out of what he owes me. Where he gets it is his affair. That will square accounts between us.

"Belotti has behaved badly. He is passed over.

"Denise may have what I intended for her."

Then, in the middle of the sheet, was written in a large hand this sentence, with a sort of frame of double and treble strokes :

"The ebony casket with the arms of Hoogstraten and d'Avila on the top is to be sent to the widow of the Marquis d'Avennes. She is to be found at Chateau Rochebrun, in Normandy."

The three men who had deciphered these notes looked at each other in silence, till Van Hout exclaimed :

"What a wild compound of spite and of womanly weakness! However hard and cold woman's heart may seem, still you will always find frost flowers if no other blossom blows there."

"I am sorry for young Mistress van Hoogstraten who is now at your house, Master Peter," said the notary. "It would be easier to strike fire out of rye bread than to wring such a sum from that old ne'er-do-weel the Baron. The daughter comes off badly for the father's sake—that I call true parental conduct."

"And what may there be in the ebony casket?" asked the notary.

"There it stands," said Van Hout. "Hand it over, Belotti."

"We must open it," said the lawyer, "for perhaps she was trying to send her best things out of the country."

"Open it? against the express wishes of the deceased?" asked Van der Werff.

"Certainly," cried the notary. "We were sent here to take information as to the property she has left. The lid is locked down. Take a pick-lock, Master; that will soon open it."

But the plenipotentiaries found no valuables in the box—nothing but letters of various dates; and these were not many. Those at the bottom—old and very yellow—contained protestations of love from the Marquis d'Avennes; the later ones were short, and signed Don Luis d'Avila. Van Hout, who understood the Castilian Spanish in which they were written, read them hastily through. As he came to the end, he exclaimed in wrathful excitement:

"Here we have the key to a piece of foul play! Do you remember the attention that was excited four years ago by a duel in which the Marquis d'Avennes fell a victim to a Spanish ruffian? In this letter the miserable braggart writes—but it is worth while to translate it to you. The first part of the note is of no importance, but here it begins: "And since I have now been so happy as to cross swords with the Marquis and to kill him—not without peril of my own life—a fate which he seems to have richly deserved since he had so greatly incurred your displeasure, the conditions you imposed upon me are satisfied, and I hope to-morrow to receive from your favour my sweet reward. Tell Donna Anna, my adored bride, that as early as possible to-morrow morning I will lead her to the altar, for the d'Avennes are an influential family, and my life will hardly be safe even to-morrow. For the rest, I hope I may count on the good feeling and generosity of my gracious friend."

Van Hout tossed the paper on to the table: "Look," he said, "what a pretty hand the villain writes! And, by God! the lady to whom this death-thrust was to be sent is

no doubt the mother of the luckless Marquis whom the Spanish assassin ran through the body."

"Yes, Master," Belotti threw in ; "I can confirm your suspicion. The Marquise was the wife of the man who had broken faith with Mistress van Hoogstraten in her youth. She who lies there, at rest at last, saw many a sun rise and set before her revenge was complete."

"Throw all the rubbish into the fire," cried Van Hout passionately.

"No," replied Peter ; "we will not send the letters away, but we will keep them among the archives. The mills of God grind slowly, and who can tell of what use these old letters may be yet ?" Van Hout nodded assent, and said, as he put the papers in order again : "I think that the fortune of the deceased lady must undoubtedly belong to the town."

"The Prince can settle that," replied Van der Werff. "How long were you in your Mistress's service, Belotti ?"

"Fifteen years."

"Well, remain a little longer in Leyden, for I believe that you may count on getting the legacy which she originally intended for you. I will represent your claims."

Within a few hours after the nocturnal obsequies of the old lady, Baron Matenesse van Wibisma and Nicolas, his son, made their appearance at the town gate, but they were refused admission, although they both craved it on the ground of their relative's death. Henrika's father made no such attempt, for he had ridden to Cologne a few days before to be present at a tourney.


CHAPTER XVI.

ON the 26th of May—Ascension Day—a joyous peal of bells rang out between noon and one o'clock, announcing the opening of the great fair. The old procession round the outside of the town walls had long since given place to a church-festival, but the name of “Ommegang”¹ was still inseparable from the Ascension-tide Fair, and various little processions still took place at the opening of the annual market, even now that the reformed faith was in the ascendant. In Catholic times, the cross had always been carried in a solemn procession through the streets, followed by the whole population of Leyden; but now the town banners and standards, with the colours of the House of Orange, led the van, followed by the nobles on horseback, the town officials in full dress, the ministers in long black robes, and the volunteers in their richest array of arms, the guilds with their emblems displayed on swaying poles and cross bars, and then the long and happy files of school-children. The very poorest managed to buy something new for the little ones on this day of the year, and the mothers never took greater pains in plaiting the little girls' long tails than for the procession at the Ascension Fair. Many a stuiver was spent—in spite of the hard times—out

¹ Omgang=Germ. Umgang—a *march round*.

of a very scanty store, in buying fresh ribbons or new shoes for the children, or for smart-coloured caps for the boys and brightly-dyed hose. The cheerful spring sun shone again in the sleekly-combed hair of the girls, while the tall lads, and even the little A B C boys, turned out smarter than the flowers in the Baron of Montfoort's garden, as the procession marched past it. Each one had stuck some greenery with the feather in his hat, and the smaller the little man the bigger his bunch was. There was no lack of busy chatter and joyful shouting, for every child as it passed its parents' house called to its mother—for the women stayed at home—to its grand-dame, to the servants; and as soon as one set up a shout a number of others joined in. Nor did their seniors keep silence when the procession came by the town-hall, the school of arms, the guild-halls, or the residence of some popular favourite; and the general hubbub was increased and encouraged by the chiming of bells, the huzzas of the boatmen on the two branches of the Rhine and on the canals, the bands of town musicians at the corners of the streets, the rattle of musketry and the thunder of cannon which the constable of the town and his artillerymen were firing off from the Burcht. They were gay doings in the bright spring, and these jolly folks seemed to be cradling themselves in reckless security of enjoyment, prosperity, and peace. How blue the sky was! how warm and bright the sunshine!

Among the members of the town-council, indeed, there were grave and anxious faces, but the trade-guilds and bands of children that followed them did not observe this, so the jollification went on without interruption, till the churches had swallowed up the holiday-makers, and there, indeed, from the pulpits, words of earnest warning were spoken, apt to make many a soul pause to reflect.



But three tenses of life belong to man—the past belongs to old age, the present to the young, and the future to childhood. What did the youths and maidens of Leyden care on this great yearly fair-day and holiday for the danger that was so close? Each one who could to-day coax a coin for a fairing out of parent or godfather—or, if not to-day, for the linen-fair on Friday and the following days—nay, each one who had merely eyes to see with and ears to hear with and a nose to smell with, went wandering with others through the rows of booths, stood to stare at the camel and the dancing-bear, or gazed into the open taverns, where not young men and maidens only, but their jolly elders swung round in the dance to the music of bagpipe, clarionet, and fiddle; or tasted spice-nuts and other sweet-meats with the attentive gravity of connoisseurs, or followed the sound of the trumpet by which a negro attracted a crowd round a quack doctor.

Adrian van der Werff lounged about, day after day, with his comrades or alone, gazing at the splendours of the fair, and now and again feeling his leather purse with a satisfied sense of wealth as it hung at his girdle; for it contained several stuivers given to him by different persons—his father, mother, Aunt Barbara, and his godmother. Young Captain van Duivenvoorde, his very particular friend, on whose tall horse he had more than once been allowed to ride, had taken him three times into a waffle-baker's booth, that he might eat his fill; and thus, even on the Tuesday after Ascension Day, his little capital was but slightly diminished. He proposed to buy something very nice with it, something worth having—a long horseman's sword, or a cross-bow, or perhaps—but this he regarded as a base temptation—the large gingerbread cake all over almonds which stood as a sign or trophy in the booth of a pastry-cook from Delft.

To be sure he and Liesje both might feast for a week on that gigantic cake if they husbanded it, and thrift is an excellent virtue. At any rate, something must be saved to buy "Broedertjes," those excellent fairing-cakes,¹ which were made and baked in many of the booths under the eyes of the passers-by.

On that Tuesday afternoon, his way led him past a stall famous for Rotterdam Broedertjes. In front of the slightly-constructed wooden shanty, made smart with mirrors and gaily-painted images, a buxom and tidy woman in the prime of life sat on a long-legged arm-chair that raised her high above the bystanders, while with wonderful rapidity and skill she poured a thin white batter, which she dipped out of a large earthenware pan, on to certain hot iron plates full of little pits or receptacles. These stood on a level with her knees, which were comfortably straddled apart. Her attendant, as prompt as thought, turned the tempting dainties with a fork, as they quickly browned in their hot metal beds, and when they were done, laid them delicately on little plates. A waiter prepared them for the consumer by laying a noble lump of gold-coloured butter on the top of each steaming heap of little cakes. An extraordinarily delicious smell, reminding him only too strongly of former joys, rose from the oven; and Adrian's fingers were already counting the contents of his purse, when the negro's trumpet rang out, and the quack doctor's chariot drew up exactly in front of the stall.

The far-famed Doctor Morpurgo was a tall man, dressed all in scarlet, with a thin, square, coal-black beard, which hung low over his breast. His demeanour was measured and haughty; the bows and gestures with which he greeted the assembled crowd were affable and

Made of buckwheat.

courteous. As soon as a sufficient number of curious folks had gathered round his chariot, which was covered with boxes and phials, he began to address them in broken Dutch, interspersed with several foreign words.

He praised the mercy of Providence who created the marvels of man's organism. In that, said he, all was wisely ordered and planned for the best, but in one respect still, nature must confess herself at fault before the tribunal of the learned.

"Do you know now where the fault lies, my masters and mistresses?" he asked.

"In the stomach," cried a merry barber's apprentice, "which is empty every day sooner than it ought to be."

"Right, my son!" answered the quack graciously. "But nature has provided for its replenishment by that vast portal out of which your answer came so glibly. Your teeth are the bungling part of the work. They come with pain, they wear out before their time, and while they last they torment their owners unless they are duly cared for. But art has correctives for nature. Look at this little box——" and he went on to sing the praises of his tooth-powder and of his elixir against the toothache. Then he went on to speak of the head, and described in vivid colours the many pains to which it was liable. But these too, were remediable, certain to be cured, if you only had money to buy his great secret. It was to be had for a mere song, and he who would risk a trifling sum was certain to be able to rid himself even of the very worst headache, as easily as if he swept it away with a broom.

Adrian listened open-mouthed to the boastful leech. The most delightful fragrance was wafted towards him from the hot baking-plate in front of the broedertje stall, and he would have enjoyed a plateful of fresh cakes with

all his heart. Indeed, the jolly pastry-cook even beckoned him with a flourish of her ladle, but he shut his hand more tightly over his purse, and fixed his eyes on the quack, whose vehicle was by this time surrounded by several men and women buying his tinctures and mixtures.

At home Henrika was lying sick ; he had twice been taken up to see her, and her handsome pale face and large dark eyes had filled his heart with compassion. Her deep, clear tones, too, when she had addressed a few words to him, were strange and unfamiliar, and had sunk into his soul. One morning he had been told that she had arrived, and from that time his mother had rarely been visible, while the house had been kept quieter than usual ; every one trod softly and spoke in lowered tones, knocked gently at the window instead of rapping with the knocker, and whenever Liesa or he laughed aloud or heedlessly jumped up or down stairs, out would come Barbara, or his mother, or Truitje, and whisper : " Hush, children ; Mistress Henrika has a headache."

Now there, in the leech's chariot, stood numberless phials which promised to cure this pain, and the famous Morpurgo seemed to be a very sensible man, not poking his fun and jokes like other quack doctors ; and he heard the wife of Wilhelm Peterssohn, the baker, who was standing near him, and whom he knew, tell her companion that the leech's remedies were good, for that they had cured her sister-in-law very promptly of a bad rash in her face.

This remark brought the lad's thoughts to a decision. A rapid vision of the long sword, the cross-bow, the gingerbread, and the savoury buckwheat cakes, crossed his mind, it is true ; but he thrust them aside by a determined effort, held his breath that he might not smell the insidious perfume of the broedertjes, and stepped quickly up to the

leech's cart. There he untied his purse from his girdle, shook the contents into his hand, and held them out to the doctor, who had fixed his eyes with a benevolent gaze on this unwonted purchaser, and asked him "if that was enough?"

"What for?"

"For the medicine to cure headache."

The nostrum-seller spread the little coins out with his forefinger on the palm of Adrian's hand, and answered gravely: "No, my lad; but I am always ready to promote the cause of learning. You have a great deal to learn yet at school, and headaches are a hindrance. Here are the drops, and for you I will give you these instructions as to another great secret of mine into the bargain."

Adrian hastily wrapped the little phial the leech had given him in the piece of printed paper, clasped his dearly-bought treasure in his hand, and ran home. On his way he was stopped by Captain Allertssohn, who came up to him with the organist.

"Have you seen my Andreas, Master Scapegrace?" he asked the boy.

"He was standing by the Rassenburg with the musicians, listening to them," said Adrian, wriggling himself from the tall Captain's grasp, and vanishing in the crowd.

"A nimble rascal," said the soldier. "So my boy is with the musicians again. His head is full of nothing but your art. He would far rather pipe a tune on a comb than comb his hair with it, and he uses every leaf and reed he picks up as a flute. He makes triangles out of broken blades, and not a saucepan is safe from his drumming,—in short, the young vagabond has sing-song on the brain; he wants to be a town musician or something of the kind."

"That is right—that is right!" exclaimed Wilhelm

eagerly ; "he has a good ear, and is the best singer in the choir."

"Well, we must think it over," replied the Captain ; "and you, if any one, can tell me what is to be got out of your line of art. If you have time this evening, Master Wilhelm, join me in my watch ; I should like to have a talk with you. But you will not find me before ten. To-day I have had that spasm in my throat, and on such occasions—by Roland, my former self !——"

He cleared his throat loudly and violently.

"I am at your service," answered Wilhelm, "for the night is long ; but now and here I will not let you go till I know what all this is about Roland and your former self."

"By all means ; but there is not much to tell, and perhaps you will hardly understand it. But come in here—a stoup of beer will help on the story, and a man's legs rebel when they have not been allowed their dues of rest for four nights running."

When the two men were seated opposite each other in the tavern parlour, the fencing-master parted his moustache over his lips and began :

"It is—how long ago ?—well, we will say a good fifteen years since I one day had occasion to ride to Haarlem with the host of the Exchange Inn, who, as you know, is a learned man, and choke-full of all sorts of old-world lore and Latin books ; he is a very pleasant man to talk to. Presently the conversation turned on the way in which often in life, when something occurs to you for the first time, you have a feeling as though the same thing had happened to you once before, and Aquanus said that this is easily explained since the soul of man is indestructible—a sort of immortal, airy bird. As long as we live it remains with us, but when it is all over with us it flies away, and is rewarded or

punished according to its deserts ; but after many hundred years, which to the Almighty are no more than the minutes it takes me to empty this cool tankard,—bring another, tapster,—the merciful Father sets it free, and then it finds a home in some new-born child. This made me laugh, but he did not care for that, and went on to speak of some ancient heathen, a most wondrous wise-head in his time, who knew for certain that his soul had formerly taken up its quarters in the body of a mighty hero. This same heathen remembered exactly where, during his former life, he had hung up his shield, and told his fellow sages. So they sent for it, and there they found the buckler, and on it the initials of the two names which had been those of the wise man hundreds of years before, during his life as a soldier. That staggered me, for you see, Master,—now, do not laugh,—before that, something had happened to me just like the experience of that old heathen. I had not many books, and from a child upwards had always read the same one again and again. I inherited it from my late father, and it is not a printed book, but a written one ; I will show it you some day—it contains the history of Roland the brave. Often and often as I have sat buried in that glorious and veracious history, my cheeks have tingled, as red as live coal, and I will own to you as I did to Aquanus, if I am not much mistaken I have sat at table with King Charles, and fought in Roland's chain-mail in tournaments and battles. I feel that I have seen Marsille the Paynim king ; and once, when I was reading the story of how Roland blew his horn at Roncevalles till the battle was ended, I was seized with a pain in my throat, as if it would burst, and at the same time I knew that I had felt that pain at some other long-past time. And when I told Aquanus all this exactly, he exclaimed that there could be no doubt that my soul had previously existed as that of

Roland, or, in other words, that in a former life I actually was that noble knight."

The musician gazed at the speaker in astonishment.

"And do you really believe that, Captain?" he asked.

"Wherefore not?" replied the other; "with God nothing is impossible. At first I laughed in the host's face myself, but his words stuck in my mind, and when I read the old story through once more—I need not hurt my eyes over it, for at every line I know what the next will be—I could not help asking myself—in short, Master, my soul certainly did once live in Roland's body, and therefore I call him my former self. In the course of years I have got into the habit of swearing by him. Folly, you think perhaps, but I know what I know. Now, I must be going. To-night we will talk further, but of other things; after all, Master, each of us has a tile off if we did but know it, and mine at any rate gives my neighbours no trouble. Besides, I only confess it to a good friend, and strangers who once ask me what I mean by 'my former self' rarely ask a second time. The reckoning, tapster—— There is that spasm again. I must see that the towers are properly manned, and stir up the outposts to keep their eyes open. If you turn out under arms perhaps you will save yourself a walk; I will answer for nothing to-day. You will have to pass by the New Rhine,¹ so just step into my house and tell my good wife not to wait supper for me. And yet—no, I will do it myself. There is something in the air to-day, as you will see before long, for I have my Roncevalles throat again."

¹ The name of a branch of the Rhine and of the houses on the quay.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN a large guard-room, not very far from the Burcht, and which had been erected during the former siege—now raised some two months since—a party of town-guards and volunteers were sitting in groups, now that the sun had set, plying the tankard while they chatted, or passing the time in card-playing by the dim light of a few lean tallow candles. The bow window, where the officers' table stood, was somewhat better lighted. Wilhelm, who in obedience to his friend's hint had put on his uniform as an ensign of the city forces, took his seat at a vacant table soon after the town-clock had tolled ten. While he was giving his order to the tapster to bring him a stoup of beer, the Captain made his appearance, and with him the Baron van Warmond, the same who had taken part in the privy council at Van der Werff's, and who, two years since, had valiantly won his captain's sash at the taking of Brill—the son of one of the noblest and richest houses in Holland, and of a mother who had borne the name of Egmont. As he came into the oriel, he drew his hand, hidden in a long fencing-glove, away from the Captain's arm, and exclaimed, shouting down the musician's order :

“Nothing of the sort, man ! The little cask of golden Würzburg Stein wine cannot be empty yet, and we will

see the bottom of it this night. What do you say, Captain?"

"Ay, it will lighten the cask and not overweight us," replied the other. "Good evening, Master Wilhelm; punctuality becomes a soldier. The men are beginning to understand what has to be done; I have posted them so that their eyes command every point of the compass. They are to be relieved every hour, and between whiles I myself will see that all is well. This is good liquor, Jonker. All honour to the man who melts down his father's gold into such a noble fluid. The first glass to the Prince!"

The three men clinked their glasses, and ere long clinked them again to the freedom of Holland and the prosperity of the good town of Leyden. Then their talk took a jovial turn, though duty was not forgotten, for at the end of half an hour the Captain rose to cast an eye himself into the distance, and rouse the attention of the watch. When he presently returned to the bow window, Wilhelm and his companion were conversing so eagerly that they did not at once observe his presence. The musician was expatiating on Italy, and Allertssohn heard him impetuously run on:

"Any one who has once seen it can never forget it, and when I sit up there among my pigeons my thoughts only too often fly after them, and my eyes cease to see our broad, uniform flats of green and our cloudy gray skies."

"Ho ho! Master Wilhelm," the Captain broke in, as he threw himself into his arm-chair, and stretched his booted legs out in front of him. "Ho ho! this time I have caught you riding your pet hobby. Italy, and again Italy! Well, I know Lombardy, for I have been to Brescia, and brought back some good steel blades, too, for the Prince and other of our Seigneurs. Then I crossed the wild

Apennines to Florence, to seek for finely-wrought armour. From Leghorn I went by sea to Genoa, and there I procured gold and silver filigree work for hangers and sword-hilts. The truth is the truth, and the swarthy rascals can work ; but the country—the country—by Roland, my former self ! how any man can prefer it to ours beats my comprehension."

"Holland is our mother," interrupted the young Baron. "As dutiful sons we think her the best of women, but still there is no shame in confessing that there are handsomer ones on the face of the earth."

"What ! you blow the same trumpet ?" exclaimed the Captain angrily, pushing his glass farther on to the table. "And were you ever on the other side of the Alps, may I ask ?"

"No, never ; but all the same——"

"All the same you are ready to believe the daubers of the painters' guild, whose eyes are bewitched by a patch of blue sea or sky ; or your musical folks, whose heads are turned by a sweet voice or pathetic fiddling ; but you will be wise, I tell you, to listen for once to a cool-headed man."

"Speak on, Captain."

"Good ; and the man who can find me out in a word of untruth may make me pay his reckoning to the day of doom. I will begin at the very beginning. First of all you have to get over those horrible mountains the Alps ; there you see barren, desert rocks, sheets of cold snow, and icy roaring torrents on which you can never float a boat. Instead of watering the meadows the perverse stream flings stones up on to the banks. Then you come down again into the plain, and there, I must confess, everything grows in plenty. I was there in the month of June, and I had a

good laugh at the tiny plots of land planted with little trees to serve as props for the vines. It looked pretty enough—but the heat, Jonker—the heat spoils all enjoyment; then the dirt in the inns, the vermin, and the shocking things one hears of the brutes on two legs, who, for filthy lucre, are ready at any time to spill Christian blood in the dark. If your throat is dry and your tongue parched, not a drop of cool beer can you get, nothing but fiery wine—and the dust, masters! the fearful dust! So far as the Brescia blades are concerned, all honour to them! But the feather was stolen out of my hat in the inn there, and the host ate onions as if they were cakes. And may I perish if a single piece of good, wholesome beef, such as my old woman serves me up every day—and we do not live like princes neither—ever came between my teeth. Then the butter, Jonker—the butter! We burn oil in our lamps and use it to grease the door-hinges when they creak, but the Italians use it to cook their fish and fowls in—bah, horrid!”

“Mind what you are saying, Captain,” cried Wilhelm, “or I shall take you at your word, and you will have to pay my reckonings as long as I live. The oil of the olive is a pure and delicate condiment.”

“For those that like it. I prefer Dutch butter. Olive oil is good enough for cleaning steel blades, but for baking and frying butter is the right thing, and there’s an end of the matter. Just ask your worthy mother to fry her pancakes and flounders in oil—why, she would stare at you. However, hear me further. From Lombardy I went to Bologna, and then crossed the wild Apennines. First up for a time, then suddenly down again; and there is a strange satisfaction—which in our country, thank God! we never enjoy—in sticking to your saddle as you go down hill. To

the right and left are tall cliffs like walls. In those narrow valleys you can hardly breathe ; as to looking abroad, you cannot do it, for whichever way you turn, there are the hideous mountains close to your nose. It is my belief that the Almighty piled up these heaps after Adam's fall, as a punishment to mankind, and that on the sixth day of creation the earth was a level plain.

"It was then August, and when the noonday sun beat upon the rocky wall, it was simply enough to kill you ; it is a miracle to me that I do not at this minute sit before you utterly baked and dried up. Then that famous blue sky of Italy—it is always the same. We have seen it here too in this country, and it is varied by lovely clouds. There are few things here in Holland that I like better than those very clouds of ours. Well, when at last the Apennines lay behind me, I came to the famous city of Florence."

"And could not that even meet with your approbation?" asked the musician.

"No, Master ; it has many grand and proud palaces and gorgeous churches, and no lack of silk and velvet everywhere, and their manufacture of cloth, too, is splendid ; but still I was not happy, Master—I was not happy in your Florence ; principally by reason of the heat, but I found everything very different from what I had expected. In the first place, there is the Arno ! why, it is perfectly ridiculous ! a thing to laugh at is that river ! Do you know what it is like ? Why, for all the world like the gutters which stand in a stonemason's yard after a heavystorm of rain, and trickle between the splinters and blocks of hewn stone."

"Beware, Captain—the reckoning !"

"I mean a stonemason's yard on a very large scale, and tolerably wide gutters. Can you contradict me when I say that the Arno is a shallow, narrow thread of water, only

fit to float a boy's canoe? And it serves to ornament a broad plain of gray pebbles—very much as that gold fringe on the gauntlet of the Jonker's glove."

"You saw it at the end of a sultry summer," replied Wilhelm; "it is very different in the spring."

"Maybe, but I beg you only to think of the Rhine and the Maas, and our other big rivers, or even the Marne and the Drecht, and the whole host of little ones. They are full all the year round, and bear fine large ships. Level and trustworthy—that is the rule in our country; one thing one day and another the next is the way in Italy. And it is just the same with their sword-play and fencing."

"But the Italians carry dangerous weapons," said Van Warmond.

"So they do; but they leap here and there—have no steadiness. I have a right to speak, for I lodged with Torelli, a fellow-swordsman, and the first fencer in the town. As to the meals they gave me, the less said the better; macaroni to-day, macaroni to-morrow, a couple of drumsticks of a fowl, *e basta*. Many a time have I strapped my belt tighter after dinner. So far as the art of fence is concerned, Torelli, to be sure, is no bungler; but even he jumps and springs about too much. In a pass with him you must keep your eyes open, but if once I can engage his blade and put in my carte tierce and longe in seconde, he is done for."

"A fine botte!" said the young Baron, "I have found it very serviceable."

"I know, I know," said the Captain eagerly; "you silenced that French ruffian with it at Namur. There is that grip at my throat again! There is something in the air to-day, my masters—there must be something in the air."

The fencing-master clutched at the front of his ruff

with his left hand, while with his right hand he set his glass on the table. He had often before done so with far less care, but on this occasion the glass flew into a thousand pieces.

"It does not matter," cried the Baron. "Here, boy—another glass for the Captain."

The fencing-master pushed his chair back from the table, and said, as he contemplated the shards of green glass, but in an altered voice, and to himself rather than to his companions :

"Ay, ay—it will be in good earnest too! smashed into a thousand pieces. Well, God's will be done! I know where my place is."

"Why, Master," interrupted Van Warmond reproachfully, as he filled up the new glass: "what maggots are these?" Before the skirmish at Brill, I jumped out of the boat with a leap; as I did so I broke my sword. I soon found another, but it passed through my mind, 'To-day will be the end of me;'—and here I sit to this day, and hope to empty many a rummer with you yet."

"It is past," said the soldier, raising his hat and wiping his brow with the back of his hand. "Every man's hour must strike once, and if mine is at hand so be it. My family will not starve. The house on the New Rhine is a freehold, and if they do not inherit much else, at any rate I can leave them an honest name and true friends. My second boy, the young musician—you will keep your eye on him, Wilhelm, I know. No man is indispensable to the world's progress, and if Heaven recalls me from my command, the young Baron of Nordwyk, Jan van der Does, can fill my place. You, Van Warmond, are in your right place where you are, and the good cause will come to a happy issue without my help."

The organist listened with astonishment to the softened tones of the strange man's voice, but the Jonker lifted his glass, exclaiming :

"What dismal thoughts over a cheerful glass ! you are the loser by it, Captain. Take up your glass again and drink my toast, 'Long live the noble art of fence and your botte : carte, tierce, and longe in seconde.'"

"Long live the art, ay and the botte," answered the Captain. "Many hundreds of noble gentlemen use the sword in this land, and the man who sits before you taught them to use it according to rule. Many an one has my botte served well in a duel, while I, Andreas, their master, have cut and thrust, parried and longed, thousands of times, and always with buttons on the foils and against a padded doublet. But no man has ever stood up to me in a duel outside the city walls, or faced me in single combat in battle, often as I have pressed a leader of the foe. This Brescia blade has run through more than one Spanish gorget ; but the art that I teach you, gentlemen, the art I love and to which I have devoted my life, I have never had the chance of putting into serious practice. This is hard to bear, my masters ; and if merciful Heaven is disposed to vouchsafe a crowning mercy to a poor man who has been no worse than his neighbours, before He calls him away, He will grant me yet once to cross my sword, in real and earnest single combat, and let me try my botte for life or death against a worthy adversary. If God Almighty grants me that——"

But the fencing-master had not finished his sentence when a man at arms flung open the door and shouted into the guard-room :

"The light is up at Leyderdorp !"

At these words Allertssohn sprang to his feet, trembling

with excitement like a boy, drew himself up, settled his arms and strappings, and drew down his sash as he cried :

"To the Burcht, bugler, and sound the assembly. Captain van Duivenvoorde, collect your volunteers ; place yourself at the Hoogewoerde Gate with four companies ready to attack if the fight comes near to the city walls. The Constable will see to your being provided with tinder. Our strength on the bastions must be doubled. You, Klaas, go at once and tell the bell-ringer of St. Pancras ; he must toll an alarm to warn the folks who have come in for the fair. Give me your hand, Jonker,—you, I know, will be at your post ; you, Master Wilhelm——"

"I am coming with you," said the musician decidedly. "Do not refuse me ; I have sat still long enough, and am suffocating in here."

Wilhelm's cheeks were glowing, and so fierce and sinister a gleam sparkled in his eyes that Van Warmond looked with astonishment at his friend, usually so calm, while the Captain exclaimed :

"Well, then, join the first company under my ensign. You do not look as if you were in the humour for jesting, and we are in earnest this night—ay ! in bloody earnest !"

Allertssohn went out of the house with a resolute step, spoke a few short and determined words to his men, ordered the drummers to beat a reveillée as they marched through the streets of the town, to rouse the visitors to the fair, and then placed himself at the head of his little company of tried men, and led them by the New Rhine. The moon shone brightly down on the silent streets, was reflected from the black surface of the river, and flooded the tall, peaked gables of the narrow houses with its silver light. The brisk step of the soldiers echoed hollow from the walls through the stilly night, and the vibration

from the sharp rattle of the drums made the window-panes ring again.

No merry children trotted on in front of the warriors with paper flags and wooden swords ; there were no saucy maidens or proud mothers to follow them ; no veteran to recall the bygone time when he too had borne arms—on this occasion there was none of all this. As the little troop—silent, and set on the rigour of battle—reached Allertssohn's house, the tower-clock struck midnight in slow and solemn tones, and at the same instant the tocsin of St. Pancras tolled the alarm.

On the first floor of the fencing-master's house a window was thrust open, at which the face of his wife appeared. An anxious married life with her eccentric husband had early aged the pretty face of his Eva, but the soft moonlight beautified her faded features. The rattle of her husband's drum was a well-known sound, but when she saw him marching past while the sinister toll of the alarm bell shook the air, she was seized with terror, and could hardly utter the words as she tried to call out : " Husband—Andreas, what is the matter, Andreas ? "

He did not hear her, for the roll of the drums, the trample of the soldiers' feet on the pavement, and the warning peal from the church tower, drowned her voice. But he saw her, and a strange feeling came over him ; her face, wrapped in a white kerchief, and glorified by the moonlight, looked sweeter than he had ever seen it since the days of their wooing, and he felt so young and bold and chivalrously defiant as he marched to danger, that he drew himself up and swaggered past in precise time to the beat of the drums, and, like some young lover, waved her a kiss with his left hand, while with his right he lowered the point of his sword.

The warlike roll and the flying standard had driven every gloomy thought out of his head. Thus they marched on as far as the Gansoord. There a cart was standing, which served as the night quarters of some travellers who had been roused by the tocsin, and who were now hastily collecting and packing their property ; an old woman was grumbling and bewailing herself as she harnessed a gaunt horse to the shafts, and a lamentable little voice called persistently out of the small window, whimpering "Mother, mother," and then for variety, "Father, father."

The Captain heard the child's wail ; the smile faded from his lips, and he walked less proudly. But then, turning to his men, he shouted in a loud voice, "Forward !" Wilhelm was marching close behind him, and at a sign from him took his place by his side ; and the Captain, as he mended his pace again, took the organist's arm, and said in a low voice :

"You will take the youngster to teach, will you not ?"

"Yes, Captain."

"That is well ; you will meet with your reward," replied the other ; then brandishing his sword, he shouted :

"Freedom for Holland ! Death to the Spaniard, and long live the Prince of Orange !"

The men heartily joined in the cry, and they marched at a quick step out of the Hoogewoerde Gate towards Leyderdorp.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ADRIAN flew home with his phial, and in his delight at having brought a cure for Mistress Henrika he forgot all about the sick lady's headache, and knocked loudly at the front door. Barbara admitted him with a by no means flattering welcome; but he was so full of the joy of possessing his dearly-purchased treasure that he boldly interrupted his aunt's angry scolding, exclaiming, with vehement confidence in the consciousness of so good a cause :

"But you will see—you will see. I have something here for the lady. Where is mother?"

Barbara saw the boy had come home bent on some delightful errand which prevented his thinking of anything else, and his fresh and radiant boyish face was so pleasant to look upon that she forgot to scold him, and said with a good-natured smile :

"You make me quite curious; what can you be in such a hurry about?"

"I have bought something; is mother upstairs?"

"Yes, to be sure; but show me what you have got."

"Some medicine; infallible, I tell you. A remedy for headache."

"A cure for headache?" said the widow, puzzled; "who can have taken you in with that story?"

"Taken me in!" said the boy, laughing; "I bought it quite cheap."

"Show it to me, child," said Barbara, trying to seize the phial; but Adrian started back and hid his treasure behind him, exclaiming:

"No, aunt; I will take it to mother myself."

"What next?" exclaimed the aunt; "were there ever such doings? A donkey dances on a slack rope, and now a schoolboy meddles with the leech's practice! Show me the thing this moment. Quack medicines, indeed—we want them truly!"

"Quack medicines!" retorted Adrian indignantly. "It cost me all my fairing stuivers, and it is very good medicine."

During this little contest Dr. Bontius and the mistress of the house came downstairs together. He overheard the boy's last words, and asked sternly:

"Where did you get the stuff?"

And he grasped the boy's hand—for Adrian did not dare to resist the grave physician—took the phial and the printed notice, and, as Adrian shortly replied,

"From Doctor Morpurgo," he said in a tone of annoyance:

"The decoction is good to throw away; but take care not to poison the fishes with it; and the stuff cost half a guilder! You are a man of substance, Master Adrian. Next time you have any superfluous capital you may lend it to me."

This speech dashed the boy's innocent happiness, but it did not convince his judgment, and with a defiant wriggle he turned his back on the doctor. Barbara felt for him, understanding what was passing in his mind; and she

whispered in deprecation to the doctor and her sister-in-law :

"It was the whole of his fairing-money—to help the sick lady."

Maria went towards the disappointed lad, drew his curly head to her side and kissed his forehead in silence, while the doctor read the printed notice. Then, as gravely as ever, and without moving a muscle of his face, he went on :

"Still, Morpurgo is not so bad as he might be. The medicine he here prescribes might, after all, do our patient good."

Adrian had been nearer crying than laughing ; he now breathed a sigh of relief, but he clung tightly to his step-mother's hand, while he once more faced the doctor and listened eagerly as De Bont went on :

"Two parts of buckbean, one part of peppermint, and half a part of valerian—the last especially for women—infused in boiling water. Drink a cupful cold, night and morning. Not bad—really not at all bad ; you have hit upon a good prescription, my little colleague. However, I had something else to say to you : my boys are going this evening to see the English riders, and they will be very glad of your company if you will go with them. You may begin with this infusion at once." The doctor bowed to the women and went out. Barbara followed him into the street.

"Are you in earnest about the prescription ?" she asked.

"Certainly, certainly," said the leech. "My grandmother was very fond of using this mixture as a cure for the headache, and she was a very shrewd woman. Morning and evening, and keep quiet after it."

Henrika was lodged in a fresh and prettily furnished room. The windows looked upon the quiet courtyard,

planted with trees, and on the farther side stood the leather factory. She was now allowed to sit up part of each day, propped with pillows, in an easy chair. Her soundly healthy nature was reasserting itself; she was still weak, no doubt, and a pain on one side of her head made her miserable sometimes for whole days and nights. Dame van der Werff's gentle and thoughtful presence did her good, and she liked to have Barbara about her too, with her fresh, wholesome face, and her simple, careful, prompt ways.

When Maria told her of Adrian's purchase she was moved to tears; however, to the boy himself she concealed her grateful feeling under a certain mockery, and greeted him with the exclamation :

"Ah! my preserver—come closer and give me your hand." And after that she would constantly call him her preserver; or, as she liked mixing Italian words with her Dutch, "Salvatore," or "Signor Salvatore." She always had a fancy for calling the people she had to do with by some name of her own devising; thus she would call Barbara, whose name she could not endure, Babetta; and little, fragile, lovely Liesje, whom she was always delighted to have with her, she named the Elf. Only the Burgomaster's wife kept her own name of Dame Maria; and when one day in jest she asked the reason of such an oversight, Henrika replied that her name exactly suited her, and that if she had been named Martha she would probably have called her Maria.

This was a good and painless day with the convalescent, and when, in the evening, Adrian had gone to see the English riding, and the scent of the blossoming limes and the pale light of the moon found their way in at her open window, she begged Barbara not to bring a lamp, but asked Maria to come to sit with her and chat in the dim light.

From talking of Adrian and Liesje they wandered into speaking of their own childhood. Henrika had grown up among her father's boon companions, amid the clatter of glasses and the cries of huntsmen ; Maria had lived in a sober citizen's house, and what each could tell was to the others like news from another world.

"It was easy enough for you to grow up into a tall, white lily as you are now," said Henrika. "But I may thank the Saints that I did no worse than I have done ; for we grew up just like weeds ; and, indeed, if I had not always loved singing, and if the chaplain had not been such an excellent musician, I should appear before you worse than I am. When will the doctor let me hear you sing?"

"Some day next week ; but you must not raise your expectations too highly. You have too high an opinion of me in everything. Remember the saying about still waters ; here they are often far less pleasant at the bottom than you would expect from the surface."

"Ah, but you have learned to keep the surface calm when the depths are stirred, and I have not. Here a strange peace has come over me ; whether I owe it to my illness or to the atmosphere that breathes in this house I know not ; but how long is it since here in my heart there was a turmoil like the sea, when the hissing waves tumble into dark abysses and the sea-mews scream and the fishermen's wives pray on the strand ? Now the waters are still. But do not be too terrified if some day the storm were to begin anew."

Maria took the excited girl's hands and held them in her own.

"Gently, be calm, Henrika !" she said ; "you must think of nothing now but of getting well. And I will confess one thing : I believe that every burden is easier to be borne

when—like the sea of which you speak—the sufferer can toss it impatiently to the surface. With me one trouble gets heaped upon another; they lie, as it were, buried in the sand.”

“Till the wind blows and sweeps them away. I do not want to be a prophet of evil, but some day, you will see, you will remember my words. What a wild, reckless creature I have been! Then, in a single day, my very soul was turned upside down.”

“Did some false love wound your heart?” asked Maria diffidently.

“No; it was only what I felt from false love in others,” said Henrika with a bitter laugh. “When I was a child my heart was easily fluttered, I do not know how often. First I felt far more than mere respect for the one-eyed chaplain, our music-master, and laid fresh flowers in the window for him every morning, but he never noticed them. Then—I may have been about fifteen—I returned the adoring glances of a page of Count Brederode’s; but he tried once to be tender, and felt my riding-whip for his pains. The next was a tall young Baron, who would have married me when I was scarcely sixteen, but he was even deeper in debt than my father, and so was shown the door. I did not shed a tear for him; and when, two months later, at a tourney at Brussels, I saw Don Fadrique, the great Alva’s son, I thought I loved him as no lady had ever loved her Amadis, although we never got any farther than looking at each other. Then that storm burst of which I spoke, and there was an end of all philandering. Some day I will tell you more about it all; I need not hold my tongue, for it was no secret. Did you ever hear of my sister? No? She was older than I, and a more perfect creature God never created—and she sang! She went to live with my aunt

who is just dead, and then—— But I must not excite myself for nothing. In short, the man she loved with all her heart left her in misery, and my father cursed her and would not put out even a finger to save her. I never knew my mother, but while I had Anna I never missed her. Her fate opened my eyes to the ways of men. During these last years many a one has wanted to marry me, but I had no confidence in them, much less love ; for I will have nothing more to do with love.”

“Till Love finds you napping one day,” replied Maria. “But it would be wrong to discuss such things with you now, for it excites you, and that will not do.”

“Oh, yes, it does one good to unburden one’s heart now and then. Did you never love any one before your husband?”

“Loved—no, Henrika ; I never truly loved any one but him.”

“And your heart really waited to see the Burgomaster before it beat any quicker ?”

“No ; before that there had been times when it was not altogether calm : I was brought up among pleasant and intelligent men, young and old, and naturally I cared more for some than for others.”

“Ay—and for one most of all.”

“I will not deny it. When my sister was married, a friend of my brother-in-law’s, a young German nobleman, came to the wedding and remained with us some weeks. I liked him very much ; indeed, to this day I think kindly of him.”

“And have you never heard of him since ?”

“No ; and who can tell what has become of him ? My brother-in-law expected great things of him, and he certainly was a rarely gifted creature ; but he was recklessly daring—a constant anxiety to his mother, I am sure.”

"You must tell me more about him."

"To what end, Henrika?"

"I will not talk any more, but I should like to sit here and breathe the scent of the limes, and listen—only listen."

"No, you must go to bed now. I will help you, and when you have been alone and quiet for an hour, I will return."

"You make me obey you, but when my preserver comes in bring him up to me; he must tell me all about the English riders. Here comes Dame Babetta with his potion—I will take it regularly, you will see."

The lad came in late, for he had been enjoying all the delights of the fair with the Doctor's children; his visit to Henrika, therefore, was strictly limited. His father he did not see at all, for Van der Werff was gone to a nocturnal meeting at the house of the commissary, Van Bronkhorst.

On the next day the fair would be at an end, school would begin again, and Adrian had intended to finish his holiday task this evening. But the English horse-riding had come in the way, and he could not possibly appear before the master without his exercise. This he frankly confessed to his stepmother, and she cleared a place for him on the table where she sat sewing, and helped out the young scholar with many a word or rule which she had learnt as a child with her brother.

It wanted but half an hour of midnight when Barbara came in and said:

"Now, that must do. To-morrow early, before school, you must finish what is wanting."

Without waiting for Maria to reply, she closed the boy's books and pushed them together. She was in the very act of doing this when the room seemed to shake from a violent

knocking at the house door. Maria threw down her work and started from her seat, while Barbara exclaimed :

"In Heaven's name what is that?" And Adrian flew into his father's room and flung open the window. The women hastily followed, and before they could question the disturber of the peace, a deep voice called up to them :

"Open the door ! I must come in."

"What is the matter ?" asked Barbara, who perceived in the moonlight that it was a soldier. "We cannot hear ourselves speak ; stop that knocking."

"Call the Burgomaster," cried the messenger, who had knocked without ceasing. "Make haste, you women ; the Spaniards are coming."

Barbara gave a loud scream, and clasped her hands. Maria turned pale, but did not lose her presence of mind.

"The master is not at home," she replied, "but he shall be sent for. Quick, Adrian—run and tell your father."

The boy rushed downstairs, and in the hall met Truitje and the man-servant, who had jumped out of bed and hastily thrown on some clothes. The old woman was now endeavouring, with trembling hands, to unfasten the door. The man pushed her aside, and as soon as the door creaked on its hinges Adrian flew out, and ran as if for a wager towards Van Bronkhorst's house. He reached it before any of the other messengers, made his way through the open door into the dining-room, and breathlessly shouted to the party who were sitting in council over their wine :

"The Spaniards are here."

The men hurriedly rose from their seats. One proposed to hasten to the Burcht, another to the town-hall, and in the excitement of the moment they could come to no coherent decision ; only Peter van der Werff remained calm, and when Allertssohn's messenger had come in and

told them that the Captain and his men were by this time on their way to Leyderdorp, the Burgomaster pointed out that their first care must be directed to the people who had come into the town for the fair. He and Van Hout undertook the duty, and before long Adrian was standing with the two men amid the rushing tide of humanity roused from sleep by the brazen voice from the St. Pancras tower.

CHAPTER XIX.

ADRIAN'S work for that night was not yet ended, for his father did not forbid his following him to the town-hall. He then charged him to go and tell his mother that he should be detained there till morning, and that any persons desiring to speak with him after the next hour or so, were to be directed by the man-servant to seek him in the Wood-market by the Rhine. His mother then sent the boy back again to ask whether his father would not have his cloak or something to eat, or wine, or some other refreshment. The lad executed these errands with eager zeal, for, as he made his way through the crowds which choked the narrow streets, he felt more important than he had ever felt before; he too had official duty to fulfil, and at night too, when other boys were in bed and asleep, particularly his own comrades, who certainly would not have been allowed to be abroad at such an hour.

Besides, an exciting time might be counted on, with tuck of drum, blare of trumpets, rattle of musketry, and roar of cannon; he felt that the game of Dutch and Spaniards was going to be played in earnest and on a grand scale. All the manly vigour of his age suddenly sprang into vitality, and when now and then he could elbow his way through the throng to some quiet space, he hurried onwards,

and sang out as cheerily as if it were some joyful announcement :

"Here they come ; the Spaniards are here ;" or, "*Hannibal ante portas.*"

After he had learnt, on his second visit to the town-hall, that his father needed nothing, and would send one of the ushers if he wanted anything, he considered himself released from duty, and at liberty to indulge his curiosity.

First he went to the English horse-riding. The tent in which the performances had been given had vanished from the face of the earth, and men and women, shouting and screaming, were rolling up huge pieces of canvas, tying up bales, and harnessing the restive horses in couples ; the scene was lighted by the dull flare of torches and the white moonbeams, showing him a large four-wheeled waggon-house, and on the narrow steps that led up to its door a little girl in very poor clothing, who was crying bitterly. Could this be the rosy cherub who, fluttering round on a snow-white horse, had appeared to him some beatific creature from a fairer world ? A scolding old woman came and lifted the child into the little house upon wheels, and Adrian went on his way, following the press of men. Then he saw Doctor Morpurgo on a bony nag, riding behind his chariot, no longer in scarlet, but in a suit of dark cloth. The negro was brutally urging the mule which dragged the vehicle, but his master did not seem to have lost his usual calm self-possession. His stock was of small value, and their lordships the Spaniards had no reason to deprive him of his head, or of the tongue by which he earned more than he needed.


Adrian followed in his wake as far as the long rows of booths in the Breede Straat, and there he saw scenes which quelled his high spirits, and by degrees made him under-

stand that matters were indeed serious and fit to make men's hearts quail. He still could laugh as he looked on at the doings of the gingerbread-maker and the yarn-seller, who had been partners in a stall, for in their first alarm they had tossed their parcels of goods each into the other's chests, just as they came to hand, and could not now sort their respective belongings. But a poor woman who sold Delft crockery at a corner stall moved him to compassion, for a heavy waggon from Gouda, loaded with large bales, had completely wrecked her frail booth, and she was wringing her hands over the ruined possessions, which represented all the fortunes of herself and her children, while the waggon-driver, never heeding her, cracked his whip to encourage his team. A little girl, who had got herself lost and was being led along by a kind-hearted citizen's wife, was howling lamentably. A rope-dancer, who had been robbed in the press of his little tin box and his small fortune in pence, wandered about vainly seeking a guardian of the peace. A cobbler thrust and stamped his stock of riding-boots and slippers and hanks of hempen thread into a wooden packing-case, while his wife tore her hair, and, instead of helping him, shrieked at him: "I knew it! I told you so, you simpleton—you wiseacre—you blockhead! They will come and take everything away from us!"

At the turning into the narrow street which leads to the bridge by the church of the Holy Virgin, past the house of the Assendelfts, a number of high-piled carts had got locked, and in their alarm the drivers, instead of getting down and fetching help, fell to scolding each other, including the women and children, who had lain down on the top of the loads. Their cries and lamentations were heard afar, but even they were presently drowned, for at the north

end of the alley a dancing-bear had broken loose, and put every one to flight that happened to be near. Shrieking and hallooing, the terrified mob fled from the beast down the street, sweeping others before them who did not know the original cause of the stampede, and thinking only of the dominant terror, shouted, "The Spaniards, the Spaniards!" Everything that stood in the way of this flying rout was overturned on the spot. A child, standing by a basket-maker's cart which had been upset, fell under the feet of the people close by Adrian, who had ensconced himself in a doorway; but he could do nothing to help the little fellow, for he was tightly squeezed into his corner, and just then his attention was diverted to a new object, for Janus Dousa appeared on the scene, mounted on horseback. He rode towards the panic-stricken crowd, and above the cry of "The Spaniards, the Spaniards!" he shouted in piercing tones, "Peace—be quiet, good folks! The enemy is not here yet. Go to the Rhine—go to the river! There are ships and barges there for all strangers. There are no Spaniards there; do you hear? no Spaniards at all."

The Baron drew up just in front of Adrian, for his horse could get no farther, but chafed and fretted under his rider, whose proclamation had but little effect; and it was not till hundreds of flying people had hurried past him that the scared crowd grew thinner. The bear from which they had fled had long since been recaptured by some brewer's men, and led back to his owner. The town-watch now appeared, with Van der Werff at their head; and the boy followed them unobserved as far as the timber-market on the southern bank of the Rhine. There he was met by another bustling swarm, for numbers of dealers had assembled there to stow their goods on board ship. Men and women were scrambling among the bales and cases



which were being rolled or pitched into the barges. A woman and child with a ropemaker's barrow had been pushed into the water, and the loudest turmoil had centred round them ; but the Burgomaster was on the spot at the right moment, directed the rescue of the drowning wretches, and did his utmost to reduce the confusion to order. The watch were ordered only to allow the fugitives to pass on to the boats which were starting for the towns they belonged to ; two gangways were thrown across to each barge—one for goods, one for passengers ; and the town-criers were ordered to proclaim—and it was in fact prescribed by law—that at the sound of the alarm-bell all the inhabitants of the town should retire within doors, and not appear in the streets under a severe penalty. All the town gates might be opened for the exit of vehicles, with the exception of the Hoogewoerde Gate, which led to Leyderdorp. Thus, presently the streets were cleared, the crowd reduced to order, and by the time Adrian reached home and dawn was breaking the town was almost as quiet as on ordinary nights.

His mother and Barbara had been anxious about him ; however, he was able to tell them he had seen his father, who had quelled the tumult under his very eyes. Even while he was still speaking they heard gunshots, and this excited the lad to such a pitch that all he asked was to run out again ; but his mother held him back, and he had to submit to go up to his room. Still he would not go to bed, but clambered up to the highest loft in the gable of the warehouse at the back, and there, through the opening which was used for hauling up the bales of leather, he could look to the east, where firing was still to be heard. He could, however, see nothing but the rosy dawn and thin clouds of smoke which floated upwards, tinged with the glow

of the coming sun. Presently, as nothing new was to be seen, his eyes closed ; he fell asleep by the open window, and dreamed of a bloody battle and of the English riders. He slept so soundly that he did not hear the clatter of wheels, which before long came up from the courtyard below. It was caused by the carts of various dealers from neighbouring towns, who preferred leaving their property in the threatened city to risking its conveyance through the invading Spanish troops, and Master Peter had permitted some of these to deposit their goods on his premises. The carts were to be admitted through the outbuildings and workshops, and such wares as might suffer from exposure to the weather were to be put under shelter, in the course of the day, in the large rooms on the ground floor.

At midnight Maria had gone to Henrika to reassure her, but the convalescent had betrayed no sort of anxiety, and when she heard that the Spanish were marching on the town, a bright gleam of satisfaction sparkled in her eyes. Maria saw it and turned away ; she refrained from speaking the sharp words that rose to her lips, and merely bidding the girl good-night, she left the room.

Henrika looked after her thoughtfully, and then sat up in bed, for on such a night sleep was out of the question. The alarm bell of St. Pancras' tower did not cease, and more than once a door slammed ; she heard voices below, and presently distant firing. Noises and murmurs which she could assign to no definite cause crowded on her ear, and as the day grew there was ceaseless bustle under her window and in the house that was usually so still. Her impatience and curiosity increased every minute, and she listened so eagerly that her head began to ache again ; but she could only catch a few words,

and those not distinctly. Had the town surrendered to the Spaniards? had some of King Philip's soldiers found quarters in the Burgomaster's house? Her blood boiled for a moment when she thought of the triumph of the Castilians and the humiliation of her native land; but then again a pleasanter excitement came over her, for in fancy she saw the bare walls of the churches, which had been stripped of every ornament, once more decorated by art; chanting processions march through the streets, and high mass celebrated by priests in splendid robes before newly-decked altars, with fine music, incense, and the tinkling of tuneful bells. She expected that the Spanish rule should restore an Established Church, in which she could pray in her own way and relieve her soul by confession. All through her former life she had known no secure foothold, no sure holdfast but her religion. A most worthy priest had been her teacher, and he had done his utmost to impress upon her that the new doctrines threatened to destroy all the mystical solemnities of life, all craving for beauty, every ideal aspiration of the human soul, and even art itself; and so Henrika wished that her country might be Spanish and Catholic rather than free from the foreign yoke—though she hated it—at the cost of being Calvinist.

By degrees the noise in the courtyard died away; but as the first beams of day fell upon her window-pane the stir below began again, busier and louder than ever. Heavy shoes clattered on the pavement, and among the confusion of voices she fancied she could recognise those of Maria and Barbara. Yes, she was not mistaken; that cry of dismay was certainly uttered by her friend, and it was followed by tones of bitter lamentation in a man's voice, and loud sobs. Some bad news must have reached

her friends, for certainly the woman she heard weeping so violently was worthy Dame Babetta.

She longed to be up; on the table by her bed, with some phials and glasses, and the night-lamp and tinder-box, stood a little bell, whose lightest tinkle had hitherto never failed to bring her nurses to her at once. Three times Henrika rang it, and again and yet again, but no one came. Her hasty blood rose, and, half in impatience and vexation, half in curiosity and sympathy, she slipped on her shoes and her wrapper. Then she went to the seat which stood on the step by the window, opened the case-ment, and looked down on the group close below. No one noticed her, for the men who had collected and who looked mournful, and the women all in tears—among them Maria and Barbara—were listening with every mark of sympathy to the eager speech of a young man, and had no eyes nor ears for anything else. Henrika recognised the speaker as Wilhelm the organist, but only by his voice, for the helmet that covered his curls, and his cuirass stained with blood, gave the unpretending musician a warlike, nay, a heroic aspect.

He was already far advanced in his narrative when Henrika, though unperceived, became one of his audience.

"Yes, Master," he said in answer to some question from the Burgomaster, "we were following them, but suddenly they vanished into the village again, and all was quiet. It would have been sheer madness to think of storming the houses, so we kept close; but at about two o'clock we heard shots in the neighbourhood of Leyderdorp. 'The Baron van Warmond has forced his way out!' cried the Captain, and he led us in the direction of the firing. That was just what the Spaniards wanted, for long before we had reached the spot, in the gloaming, a company of Castilians

jumped up from a ditch with white shrouds over their armour, fell upon their knees, muttered a *Pater Noster*, shouted Sant Jago, and rushed upon us. We had seen them in time, however, so the halberdiers could have their pikes ready, and the musketeers could lay their matchlocks down on the ground. So the Spaniards met with a warm reception, and four of them fell in the attack. We were stronger in numbers than they were, and their captain retreated in good order to their ditch. There they remained, for their work was done; they were only to detain us, and then leave us to be cut off by a stronger corps. We were too weak to drive them out of their position, and when it was growing light in the east and still they would not come out, our captain went towards them with a white handkerchief displayed, and the drummer playing, and called to them in Italian, of which he had learnt a little in Lombardy, that he wished the gentlemen a very good morning, and if there should be among them an officer with a grain of honour in his composition, he might come forth and cross swords with a captain who wished for the opportunity. He pledged his word that his men should look on at the duel without interfering, be the issue what it might. On this two shots were fired from the ditch, and the bullets barely missed our poor master. We shouted to him to save his own life, but he did not stir, only shouted to them that they were milksops and assassins like their king.

“Meanwhile it had become pretty light; we could hear them talking in their ambush, and just as Allertssohn was about to turn on his heel, an officer leaped up on to the bank and cried out, ‘Stand, braggart, and hold your own!’ The captain drew his Brescia blade, bowed to his antagonist just as if he were in the fencing-ground, tried his steel, and measured it with the Spaniard’s. He was a lean-made

man, and very tall, and, as it soon appeared, a dangerous swordsman. He whisked round our captain with cuts, thrusts, and feints, but Allertssohn kept quite cool, and at first confined himself to parrying. Then he engaged the Spaniard's blade in *carte*, as his opponent parried followed in *tierce*, and then as quick as lightning with a *longe* in *seconde*, such as he alone knew how to deal. The Castilian fell on his knees, for the Brescia blade was through his lungs, and in a few seconds he was dead.

"No sooner was he stretched on the grass than the Spaniards rushed out on us again, but we drove them back once more, carrying the dead body with us. So proud and gay as at that moment was our captain never seen. You, Jonker van Warmond, can easily guess the reason. He had at last done justice to his famous *botte* in single combat for life or death with an opponent of equal skill; he said to me that the morning had brought him luck, and ordered us to surround the ditch and take the enemy in flank. But hardly had we begun to move when the expected corps marched out of Leyderdorp. Their loud 'Sant Jago' rang out afar, and at the same time our old foe jumped out of the ditch and renewed the onslaught. Allertssohn rushed upon them, but he never reached them. Ah! Master, I shall never forget it—a bullet brought him to the ground by my side. It must have pierced his heart, for he said never a word but, 'Take care of the boy!' and then he stretched out his long limbs and was dead. We wanted to bring him away, but we were pressed by numbers, and it was as much as we could do to retire in miserable disorder within cover of the guns of the Jonker's volunteers. The Spaniards dared not pursue us so far. So here we are. The body of the Castilian is lying in the tower by the Hoogewoerde Gate. Here are

the papers we found upon him, and here is his ring ; he had a proud coat of arms for his signet."

Peter van der Werff took the letter-case in his hand, and glanced through the contents ; then he said :

" His name was Don Luis d'Avila."

But he said no more, for his wife had just observed Henrika's head stretched far out of the window, and, startled to see her, called out in dismay :

" Mistress ! for Heaven's sake, Mistress, what are you doing ?"

CHAPTER XX.

DAME VAN DER WERFF was anxious on Henrika's account, but the young lady nodded to her with unwonted cheerfulness, and met her mild remonstrances with the assurance that the fine morning had done her good. Providence, she said, was just in its dealings, and if it were true that confidence in recovery was a help to the physician, Doctor Bontius would now have an easy patient to deal with. The Spaniard whom Allertssohn had killed could be none other than the wretch who had dragged Anna into misery. Maria left her, astonished but quite easy about her, and went to tell her husband how she had found the invalid, and of the connection which—as it would seem—had existed between the dead Spanish officer and Henrika and her sister. Peter listened to her with only half his attention, and as soon as Barbara had brought him a freshly plaited ruff, he interrupted his wife in the midst of her story by handing her the Castilian's letter-case and saying :

"There, let her convince herself; and give me the portfolio back this evening. I am not likely to be home to dinner; in the course of the day you will try to see poor Allertssohn's widow?"

"Of course I will," she said eagerly; "and whom will you put in his place?"

"That the Prince must decide."

"And have you thought of any way of keeping up communications with Delft in spite of the enemy?"

"On your mother's account?"

"Not for that alone. Rotterdam also lies to the south of us. Now, from Haarlem and Amsterdam—from the north, in short—we have nothing to look for, for everything is in the hands of the Spaniards."

"I will procure you a seat at the Council of War. What makes you so wondrous wise?"

"Well, every one must have their own thoughts, and it is surely quite natural that, with you, I should look into the future with my eyes open rather than blindfold. Have they availed themselves of the English regiment to secure the works by the old Canal? The Kaak, too, is an important point."

Peter looked at his wife with astonishment, and the feeling came over him which troubles an unready writer when some one unexpectedly looks over his shoulder. She had hit upon a blot, a serious and momentous oversight, which, to be sure, did not wholly rest with him; but, as he certainly did not choose to be answerable to her, and perhaps would have found it difficult to justify himself, he did not reply, and simply saying: "These are men's affairs—till this evening," he went past Barbara and towards the door.

Maria did not know how she found courage, but before he had laid his hand on the lock she had collected herself sufficiently to call out to him:

"Will you leave me so, Peter? Is that fair? What did you promise me on your return from your journey to see the Prince?"

"I know—I know," he said impatiently. "But no man

can serve two masters, and in these anxious days I entreat you not to trouble me with questions and matters that do not concern you. To manage the affairs of the town is my business ; you have your sick friend, the children, the poor—be satisfied with these.”

And without waiting for an answer he left the room, while she looked after him, silent and motionless. Barbara gazed at her for a moment anxiously, but without speaking. Then she busied herself with the papers on her brother's writing-table, muttering half to herself, but still turning to her sister-in-law :

“These are bad times indeed, and each of us may thank God that he has not such a burden to bear as Peter. He is responsible for everything, and with a hundredweight tied to each leg who could dance lightly, I wonder? A better heart beats in no man's breast, and not an honest soul lives. How the market-folk blessed his foresight ! It is in a storm that you know the pilot's worth, and when the fray was at the thickest Peter was greatest. He knows full well what lies before him, but these last weeks have made him years older. We must overlook a great deal, I think.”

Maria nodded assent, and Barbara quitted the room ; but in a few minutes she returned and said kindly :

“You look but poorly, child ; just come and lie down a while. An hour's sleep is better than three meals, and a night like last night is bound to leave its traces at your age. The sun shines so brightly that I have drawn the curtains over the windows, and I have made your bed. Now, be reasonable and do as you are bid.”

With these words, she took Maria's hand and drew her away. Maria did not resist, and although, when she was alone, she could not keep back her tears, she was soon overmastered by sleep.

She woke greatly refreshed, and, having changed her dress, she betook herself about noon to Allertssohn's house. Her heart was heavy, and self-pity had once more taken possession of her. Eva, "Peter's daughter," the fencing-master's widow, a quiet, humble creature, whom she hardly knew by sight, refused to be seen; she was weeping alone in her room, but at the house Maria found the musician, who was trying to speak words of comfort to the son of his lost friend, and had promised to take him under his own teaching and make a good musician of him. Dame van der Werff sent up a message begging the widow to see her the following day, and then she and Wilhelm left the house. The street was full of citizens, apprentices, and women, standing together in knots and discussing the events of the night and the imminent danger; and Maria was several times interrupted as she was telling Wilhelm who the fallen Spaniard was, and that Henrika wished to speak with him—the musician—as soon as possible, for their progress was checked, now by a company of volunteers or a troop of the town-guard on their way to relieve the watch on the bastions and walls, and now by cannon that was being transported. Was it the anticipation of coming events, or was it the rattle of drums and the trumpet blast, that so agitated her companion as to make him clasp his forehead in his hands, and more than once compel her to beg him to moderate his pace? And there was something unusual and constrained in his voice as he told her, in answer to her questions, that the Spaniards had come by the Amstel, the Drecht, and the Braasemer, by ship, and so into the Rhine, and then landed at Leyderdorp.

He was interrupted in his explanation by a mounted messenger wearing the Prince's colours, and followed by a crowd, not merely of children but of hurrying men, eager to reach

the town-hall as soon as he ; but as soon as the throng was past, Maria began again to ply her companion with questions. The warlike turmoil, the firing—audible in the distance—the gaudy uniforms of the soldiers, which were everywhere conspicuous instead of the sober suits of the citizens—all worked her up to a high pitch of excitement, and all that she heard from Wilhelm was little calculated to soothe it. The chief strength of the Spaniards was posted on the road to the Hague. The blockade of the town was already begun, but the enemy could hardly make it complete, for the English auxiliaries who were to defend the new fort at Valkenburg, the village of Alfén, and the sluices at Gouda, were entirely to be relied on. Wilhelm himself had seen the English forces, their commanders Colonel Chester and Captain Gensforth, and was full of the praises of their splendid equipment and handsome appearance.

At her own door Maria was about to take leave of her companion, but he begged to be allowed to speak with Mistress Henrika at once, and could hardly be persuaded that he must have patience until the physician had given his consent.

At dinner, Adrian—who was always ready to chatter when his father was not present at the meal—told them of all he had himself seen, as well as the news and rumours he had been able to pick up at school or in the streets ; and his communicativeness was not a little encouraged by his mother's eager questions.

A great unrest had fallen upon the Burgomaster's wife. Her enthusiasm in the cause of freedom—a cause to which those nearest and dearest to her had fallen victims—blazed up anew, and wrath against the oppressors of her country seethed hotly in her breast. This tender, maidenly-souled woman, in daily life so reserved, so incapable of loud or

bitter utterance of feeling—was now capable of mounting the ramparts, and, like Kenau Hasselaar of Haarlem, of facing the foe as stoutly as the men. Her wounded pride and all the emotions which, only an hour since, had weighed upon her spirit sank into nothingness as compared with her sympathy for her country's cause. Inspired with new courage for life she went up to Henrika's room; and, after lighting the lamp, as it was by this time growing dark, she sat down to write to her mother; this she had postponed doing since the sick girl's arrival, and the communication with Delft might at any moment be cut off. As she read the letter through before closing it, she felt satisfied with it and with herself, for it breathed brave confidence in the triumph of the good cause, and expressed fully and freely how cheerfully ready she herself was to suffer the worst that might befall.

Barbara had already gone to bed when Peter at last came in. He was so tired out that he could hardly touch the food that had been kept ready for him. While he was trying to eat he confirmed all that Maria had already heard from the musician, and was gentle and affectionate; but his looks grieved her, for she remembered Barbara's allusion to the heavy burden he had to bear. This evening, for the first time, she saw two deep lines which care had engraved between his eyes and mouth, and filled with tender solicitude she went up behind him, laid her hands on his cheeks and kissed his forehead. He started slightly, and grasping her slender hand so tightly that she almost winced, pressed it to his lips and eyes, where he held it for some minutes. At last he rose and led the way to bed, bid her an affectionate goodnight, and lay down. By the time she was ready he was sleeping heavily; utter weariness had overpowered him instantly. But neither of them could sleep

calmly that night, and as often as she woke she heard him sighing and moaning. She would not stir for fear of scaring away the sleep he so sorely needed, and twice she even held her breath as she heard him muttering to himself. Once he said in a low voice : "It is too much, too much," and then again, "If only I can bear it !"

When she awoke in the morning he had already quitted the room, and was gone to the town-council. At noon he returned with the news that the Spaniards had entered the Hague, and had been hailed and welcomed there by the miserable renegades. The staunch patriots and the Gueux had, happily, had time enough to escape to Delft, for the heroic Nikolas Ruichhaver had succeeded in keeping the enemy in check for some time at Geestburg. The western side was still open, and the Valkenburg, newly fortified and garrisoned by the English, would not be easily stormed. At Alfen, to the east, the other British auxiliaries lay to the rear of the Spaniards.

The Burgomaster told her all this unquestioned ; still, not so fully and naturally as he would have done to men. He paused in his speech many times and gazed into his plate. It was evidently an effort to him to speak of such matters as he was used to discuss only with his colleagues, before women, children, and servants. Maria listened to him attentively, but she modestly restrained her own observations, and only encouraged him to talk by affectionate glances and sympathetic exclamations, while Barbara rashly plied him with one question after another.

They had nearly finished their meal when the Jonker van Warmond entered the room unannounced, and begged the Burgomaster to come with him at once, as Colonel Chester was standing at the White Gate with a detachment

of the English troops, and craved to be admitted to the town. At this news, Peter angrily set his tankard down on the table, started up and left the room, leaving Van Warmond to follow.

Late in the afternoon the house of the Van der Werffs was full of visitors. The gossips came in to discuss the proceedings at the White Gate with Dame Barbara; Burgomaster van Swieten's wife had learnt from her husband himself that the English had surrendered the fine new fort of Valkenburg, and taken to their heels at the mere sight of the Spaniards. The enemy had marched across the *Dunes* to Nordwyk, and it would have been quite easy for the British to hold so strong a position. The English were now demanding to be let into the town itself; but Dame van Hout asserted that the members of the council, more especially Van der Werff and her husband, were doing their utmost to prevent this. All the women very decidedly expressed their objection to see five hundred more food-consumers quartered in the town, and blamed the Prince's commissary, who was said to hold opposite views, and to wish that the gates should be opened to the English contingent. Dame van Swieten, meanwhile, had sat in silence, playing with the cat and listening to the others, but she now said with an affected smile:

"Believe me, it will be all the same whether we admit our foreign allies or not; for before the raspberries are ripe in the garden all idea of resistance will be at an end."

Maria, who was offering them cakes and spiced wine, at these words set her tray on the table and said:

"Is that your wish, Dame Magtelt?"

"It is my wish," was the very decided answer; "and many sensible people wish the same. Resistance is impossible against such overpowering numbers; the sooner

we appeal to the king's clemency, the more surely will it be extended to us."

The other women listened speechless to the utterances of the audacious Magtelt, but Maria stepped towards her and answered wrathfully :

"Whoever says that has only to go over at once to the Spaniards—whoever says that, desires nothing but the disgrace of the town and of the country—whoever says that——"

Magtelt interrupted Maria with a forced laugh, exclaiming :

"Indeed, Dame precocity ! And are you going to take your seniors to task ? And is it usual to attack a visitor in this fierce way ?"

"Usual or not," retorted the other, "I will never allow such words to be spoken in my house ; and if it were from my own sister's lips I would say : Go, you are no friend of mine !"

Maria's voice trembled, and with outstretched arm she pointed to the door. Dame Magtelt struggled to be calm, but as she quitted the room she could find no further utterance than :

"Never mind ! never mind ! But you will never see me here again."

Barbara followed the offended lady, and those who remained sat with their eyes in their laps ; but Wilhelm's mother was delighted.

"Well done, little woman ! well done !" she exclaimed. Friendly Dame van Hout put her arm round the young woman and kissed her forehead, whispering at the same time :

"There, turn your back on the others and wipe your eyes."

CHAPTER XXI.

A STORY is told of a condemned criminal who was cast by a barbarous tyrant into a dungeon of ingenious construction. Each day the walls of his cell shrank in extent—each day they closed in upon the helpless wretch, till he gave up the ghost in despair, and his prison became his grave. In the same way the iron circle of Spanish regiments was every hour drawn more tightly and closely round the walls of Leyden; and if at last they should succeed in breaking the resistance of their victims a fate more hideous and relentless than that which had overtaken that prisoner would overwhelm the town. The blockade which Valdez, King Philip's field-marshal, and his skilful lieutenant Don Ayala had effected in little more than two days was now almost complete; the outpost of Valkenburg, which had been so carefully strengthened, was in possession of the enemy; and the danger had altogether swept down upon them far more swiftly and irresistibly than the most despondent of the inhabitants had conceived possible. If Leyden should be taken, its buildings would fall a prey to the flames and to rapine; its men would be butchered; its women dishonoured. The fate of other places, and the character of the Spaniards, were only too sure a warranty for that.

It was impossible to think of the guardian genius of the busy town otherwise than as sitting under a sinister sky with a gloomy frown and anxious eyes, and yet the scene by the White Gate on that very afternoon was as gay and bright as though some spring-tide festival were being closed by a gorgeous spectacle. Wherever standing-room was to be found on the walls, as far as to St. Katharine's tower, they were densely thronged with men, women, and children. The old ramparts looked like the closely-packed amphitheatre round an arena, and the busy hum of the many-voiced and inquisitive crowd was audible far below in the heart of the town.

It is a merciful dispensation which enables men thus to revel in a brief gleam of sunshine breaking through ominous clouds. The apprentices and workmen, the women and children, perched up there on the walls forgot all about the immediate danger, and feasted their eyes on the splendid accoutrements of the English soldiers, who looked up at them from outside, audaciously nodding and smiling at the girls, though some, no doubt, with graver mien, looked forward to the issue of the negotiations now going on within the walls.

Now the White Gate was thrown open. Commissary van Bronkhorst, Van der Werff, Van Hout, and other leaders of the little commonwealth, escorted the English colonel and staff over the bridge. The Englishman seemed boiling over with indignation, and more than once laid his hand upon his sword-hilt while the Leydeners spoke to him, and they finally took leave of him with profound bows, to which he returned a mere haughty wave of his hand. The citizens returned into the town, the gates swung to, the old lock creaked, the outer bars—strong iron-shod beams—fell into their sockets, the chains on the drawbridge

rattled loudly and ominously, and the assembled multitude understood that the English were excluded from the city.

Loud huzzas, mingled with many an expression of aversion, rang through the air: "Long live Orange!" shouted the boys, among whom were Adrian and the dead fencing-master's son; the women waved their handkerchiefs, and all eyes were fixed on the English. A loud trumpet blast was heard; the mounted officers of the English force rode forward to meet their colonel, and held a short council of war with him, interrupted, however, by the violent speech of some few of their number, and soon after a signal was sounded; the soldiers hastily formed in ranks, and many a one as he turned away threatened the town with his fist. The guns and halberts, which had been neatly piled, were snatched up by their owners, and, guided by the sound of drums and trumpets, the chaos fell into order. Individuals formed lines; lines multiplied into companies; the gaudy standards were raised and flaunted on the evening breeze; and with loud huzzas the whole force marched off along the Rhine to the south-west, where the Spanish outposts were placed; and the Leyden lads joined heartily in the shouts of the English.

Allertssohn's orphan, Andreas, had begun to shout too, with a will; but catching sight of a tall officer marching proudly ahead of his ensign, his voice failed him, and covering his eyes with his hand he ran home to his mother. His companions did not observe him, for the sinking sun was so dazzlingly mirrored in the cuirasses and helmets, the trumpets rang out so jollily, the officers' horses pranced so bravely under their riders, the gaudy feathers and flags and the smoke of the burning slow-matches borrowed such glorious hues from the ruddy setting sun, that all eyes and ears were spellbound by the scene.

But suddenly a new excitement attracted the attention of old and young. Thirty-six English soldiers, and among them some officers, had remained behind the others, and now came up to the gates. Once more the lock ground and shrieked and the chains rattled. The little party were admitted and made welcome at the entrance to the Nordeinde by Van Bronkhorst and the Burgomaster.

Every one on the wall had expected that a fray between the retreating British and the Spaniards would now be fought under their very eyes. But, far from this, before the first ranks had reached the Spanish outposts, they saw the slow matches tossed away, the flags lowered, and as night fell and the gossips and sight-seers dispersed, they learnt that the English had deserted the good cause and gone over to the Spaniards. The six-and-thirty who were admitted into the town were the little handful who had refused to yield to this traitorous council.

It now became Van Hout's task to find quarters for Captain Cromwell and his staunch followers, British and Dutch.

Van der Werff went home with Van Bronkhorst, and their words though not loud were vehement. The Commissary declared that the Prince would be very irate at the dismissal of the English, since he laid great stress, and with justice, on Queen Elizabeth's countenancing the cause of their freedom, and that the Burgomaster and his supporters had done it but ill service that day. This Van der Werff denied, since the one thing to be thought of was the preservation of Leyden. If it should fall, Delft, Gouda, and Rotterdam were lost, and all farther efforts to win freedom for Holland must be vain. Now, five hundred valiant trenchermen must help to exhaust their already slender stock of provisions. They had done their utmost to give their refusal a courteous form, and the English had had the

choice of encamping under the protection of the cannon mounted on the city walls.

When the men parted neither had convinced the other, still, each was perfectly sure of his colleague's fidelity and conscientious purpose.

As they parted, Peter said :

"The Town-secretary ought to represent the reasons for our determination to the Prince in a clear and convincing document—and no man can do it so well—and his Excellency cannot fail to approve of them; on that you may rely."

"Let us hope so," replied Van Bronkhorst. "But remember that we shall soon be sitting inside these walls like imprisoned felons under lock and key, and that by the day after to-morrow no messenger may be able to reach him."

"Van Hout has the pen of a ready writer."

"And to-morrow morning a proclamation is to be read, in which we advise all women, old men, and children to quit the town—all, in short, who may consume provisions without helping in the defence. They can reach Delft without danger, for that road is still open."

"Very good," said Peter; "and indeed many women and girls have already started, as I learn."

"That is well!" exclaimed the Commissary. "We are piloting an ill-found ship in a stormy sea, and if I had a daughter at home I know well enough what I should do. Farewell for the present, Master. I wonder what is happening at Alfén; I hear no firing now."

"The darkness has interrupted the fighting."

"We must hope for the best to-morrow, and if those who are outside all surrender together, we in here will neither waver nor yield."

"We will hold out to the last," said Peter resolutely.

"To the last—and, by God's help, to a happy issue."

"Amen," said Peter, grasping his friend's hand and turning homewards.

On the steps he met Barbara. She wanted to call Maria, who was up with Henrika, but he would not have it, and took to walking up and down his room ; his lips were pinched and set as if he were suffering some great physical pain. When he presently heard his wife's voice in the eating-room, he collected himself by a strong effort, went to the door and slowly opened it.

"Are you at home? and here was I quietly sitting and spinning!" she exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, child. Come in here to me—I want to speak to you."

"For God's sake, Peter, what has happened? You speak so strangely and look so white!"

"I am not ill, but matters are serious—fearfully serious, Maria."

"It is true, then, the enemy——"

"They have gained enormous advantages yesterday and to-day—but pray do not interrupt me now if you love me, for what I have to say to you is not easily said ; it is hard, very hard, to speak. How shall I begin? How can I express myself so that you may understand exactly what I mean? You see, my child, I brought you into my home out of a snug and happy little nest. What I had to offer you was but little, and, in truth, you expected to find more. I know—I know you are not satisfied."

"But it would be so easy for you to satisfy me."

"Nay, Maria, you are mistaken. In these terrible times only one thing claims my thoughts, and everything beside or beyond that,—everything that diverts my mind,—

is wrong. And yet, at this very time, one consideration paralyses my courage and shakes my resolution; it is my fear of what your fate may be. For who knows what may be in store for us? and so I must speak—I must tear my very heart out, and tell you that I wish—— Wish! Good God, is there no other word to express what I feel?”

“Speak, Peter—say it, and do not torture me so,” cried Maria, gazing terrified into her husband’s face; it could be no small matter that could make so resolute and plain-speaking a man hesitate and beat about the bush.

The Burgomaster controlled himself and began afresh :

“You are right; there is no use in postponing what must at last be said. We decided to-day in council that all women and girls should be enjoined to leave the town. The road to Delft is still open, but by the day after to-morrow it may be so no longer, and later—what may happen later who can tell? If no succours arrive and provisions run short, there will be no choice left but to open the gates to the foe, and then, Maria, you can imagine what the end will be. The Rhine and the canals will run purple with the blood that will pour into them, and they will reflect the flames of such a *feu-de-joie* as was never seen. Woe to the men, and ten times woe to the women, on whom the fury of the conquerors shall fall! And you—you, the wife of the man who has persuaded thousands to revolt against King Philip—the wife of the proscribed rebel who within these walls is the leader of the rebels——”

At these words Maria had opened her eyes widely, and she interrupted her husband by asking :

“Are you trying to test how far my courage will hold out?”

“No, Maria; I know you will stand firm, and would look even death in the face without a tremor, as your sister did

before you. But I—how can I bear the thought of seeing you fall into the hands of our accursed butchers? My terrors for you, my intolerable fears, would cripple my firm resolve at some decisive moment, and so—I must say it——”

Maria had listened thus far in silence; she knew what he required of her. But now, stepping close up to him, she interrupted him by saying firmly, nay, imperiously:

“No more, not another word—do you understand? I will not hear another word!”

“Maria!”

“Be silent—it is my turn now. What! to escape your own terrors you would turn your wife out of the house; your fears will maim your courage, you say. And will anxiety in my absence confirm it, do you think? And if you love me, you must surely feel——”

“If I love you, Maria?”

“Well, well. But you have quite forgotten to consider what my feelings will be in exile since I love you too. I am your wife. We swore to each other at the altar that nothing should part us. Have you forgotten it? Have I not made your children my own? Have I not taught them to be glad to call me mother? Yes or no?”

“Yes, Maria—a hundred times yes.”

“And can you find the heart to abandon me to the cruel mercy of anxious absence? will you compel me to break the most sacred of oaths? Can you bear to part me from the children? You think me too mean and poor a creature to suffer famine and death for the sacred cause which is as much mine as it is yours! You like to call me ‘child,’ but I can be strong too, and, come what may, I shall not shed a tear. You are the husband and must command, I am the wife and

will obey. Shall I go? Or shall I stay? I await your answer."

Her voice shook as she ended; and he, deeply agitated, exclaimed:

"Stay, stay, Maria! Come—come and forgive me."

He took her hand and said again:

"Come, come!"

But she drew away her hand and shrank back a little, saying:

"Leave me, Peter; I cannot just now; I must have a little time to get over it."

His arms fell by his side, and he looked sorrowfully into her eyes; but she turned on her heel and left the room without speaking. He did not follow her, but returned to his work, endeavouring to give due consideration to a variety of matters relating to his office; but his thoughts constantly reverted to Maria. His love weighed upon his soul as if it were a sin; he thought of himself as he might of an express messenger who should linger by the way to pluck flowers and waste precious time, and neglect the business he was charged with in such idle dalliance. His heart was unutterably heavy and sad, and he felt it almost as a relief when, shortly before midnight, the bell of St. Pancras tolled out its boding knell of evil. In a supreme moment, he knew that he should think and feel nothing but what duty demanded of him, so he took his hat from its peg with revived energy and left the house with a firm step.

In the street he met the Baron van Duivenvoorde, who requested his company at the White Gate, where some English had again made their appearance; a handful, these, of brave allies who had defended Alfen and the Gouda sluices in fierce and bloody fight, until their gunpowder

had run short and they had been compelled either to yield or to save themselves by flight. The Burgomaster went with the soldier, and the gates were opened to the brave warriors. There were not more than twenty of them, and among them were a Dutch captain, Van der Laen, and a young officer who was a German. Peter gave orders that they should for this night be quartered in the town-hall, and with the guards at the gate; to-morrow they should be suitably billeted in the citizens' houses. Janus Dousa invited the Dutch officer to make himself at home with the best his house could offer, and the German went to the Exchange Inn. All were required to wait upon the Burgomaster next day at noon, to have their quarters assigned to them and be enrolled in different companies of volunteers.

The alarm-bell had also broken the women's rest in the house of Van der Werff; Barbara had gone straight to Maria, and not till they had ascertained the cause of the tolling and had satisfied Henrika, did they return each to her own room. Even then, Maria could not sleep; her husband's proposition that they should part in the danger that threatened them had raised a turmoil that pervaded her whole being, and had wounded her deeply. She felt deposed, set aside, and if not misunderstood at any rate but half understood by the man for whose sake alone she rejoiced to recognise in herself some lofty aim and magnanimous enthusiasm. What pleasure has a blind man in the charms of a lovely wife? of what value to her were the rich treasures of feeling that lay buried in her breast if he neither saw them nor cared to find them? "Show him, tell him how lofty your soul can be," her love advised; but womanly pride came in and whispered: "Do not force it upon him if he scorns to see it."

Thus the hours dragged by, and brought her neither

sleep nor peace, nor even the wish to forget the humiliation she had suffered. At last Peter came into the room, very softly and carefully, so as not to wake her. She pretended to be asleep, but she could still see him with half-shut eyes. The light fell on his face, and the deep lines she had already noticed were marked as dark furrows of shadow between his eyes and mouth. They gave his face a stamp of stern and gnawing anxiety, and Maria remembered how, the night before, he had muttered in his sleep, "Too hard!" and "If only I can bear it!" Then he came to her bedside and stood there for some time, but she could not see him then, for she kept her eyes tightly closed; still the softened glance of tenderness with which he had come to look down upon her did not escape her. It dwelt in her 'mind's eye,' and she fancied that she could feel that he gazed at her lovingly, and was praying for her as for a child. Sleep had long since overpowered her husband when she still lay wide awake in the early dawn. For his love's sake she must need forgive him much, but she could not yet forget the blow he had dealt her pride. "A toy," she thought to herself, "a gem, a work of art—such things as these a man bestows in safety when danger threatens; but his axe or his bread, his sword or his talisman, in short, anything that is indispensable to his existence, that he does not part with till death." She was not indispensable to him, not a necessity of life. If she had yielded to his wish and had left him, then—then indeed——

But here the current of her thoughts was checked, for the question for the first time occurred to her, "Would he really have missed your helping hand—your encouraging words?" And she turned over uneasily while her heart beat fast as she confessed to herself that she had done but

little to smooth the thorny way for him. And a dim perception rose up to torment her, that it was not by his fault alone that she had failed to find perfect happiness by his side. Nay, did not her former conduct justify him in expecting hindrance rather than help and encouragement from her in the desperate danger that threatened them?

Full of an earnest desire to judge herself clearly and justly, she sat up propped against the pillows and passed all her former life in review. Her mother had, in her youth, been a Catholic, and had often told her how free and light she had felt after confiding all that could trouble a maiden's conscience to a third person pledged to secrecy, and after receiving from the lips of a minister of God the assurance that now, undoubtedly forgiven, she might begin a new life. "It is more difficult for us now," her mother had said before her first communion, "for we of the reformed faith stand face to face with God, and must make our peace with Him ourselves before we approach the Table of the Lord. And no doubt that is all-sufficient; for when, without cloak or concealment, we confess everything that weighs upon our conscience, be it in thought or deed, to the Almighty Judge, and honestly repent, we are assured of pardon through the Redeemer's blood."

Maria now strove earnestly to attain to this inward confession, and sternly and uncompromisingly examined her past conduct. Yes, she saw much in herself that was unconverted; she had expected much and given little. She acknowledged her guilt, and henceforth amendment was to begin. After this self-conviction her heart was lighter, and when at last she turned her back on the growing daylight in the hope of finding sleep, she thought with pleasant anticipation of the loving greeting she would give

her husband in the morning ; but she was soon fast asleep, and when she woke her husband had long since left the house.

As usual, she set to work to put her husband's sitting-room in order before doing anything else, and as she passed the portrait of the lost Eva she cast a kindly glance up at her. On the writing-table lay a Bible, the only book her husband ever read that had not a direct bearing on his official work. Barbara, too, would sometimes seek consolation and edification from the same source, but she more commonly used it as an oracle in cases of doubt—opening it at random, and reading the passage on which her finger fell. This generally suggested its own interpretation, and she commonly, though not invariably, acted upon it. This very day, in fact, she had disobeyed such an indication ; for, in answer to a question as to whether she still might venture, in spite of the Spanish blockade of the town, to send a sack of creature-comforts of various kinds to her son, the Gueux, at sea, she had lighted on these words of the prophet Jeremiah, "Their flocks and their tents shall they take away, and they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels ;" and, nevertheless, the package had been given in charge early that morning to a widow, who, in obedience to the order in council, was leaving for Delft with her grown-up daughters. The good things might certainly reach Rotterdam, and what mother does not hope for a miracle in her child's behalf ?

Before putting the Bible into its place, Maria opened it at the nineteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which discourses of charity, and which was a particular favourite with her. There it is written, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ;" and again, it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all

things, endureth all things." To be kind and long-suffering, to hope and endure all things, this was the duty that love required of her.

Just as she had closed the book and was about to go up to Henrika, Barbara announced Janus Dousa. The young nobleman had on his breastplate and gorget, and looked far more like a soldier than a sage or a poet. He had vainly sought Peter at the town-hall, and had come hoping to find him at home. One of the messengers that had been sent to the Prince had returned from Dortrecht with a letter which appointed Dousa to the post vacated by the death of Allertssohn, and he was not only to be the captain of the town-guard, but commandant of all the forces. He had accepted the call with cheerful alacrity, and begged Maria to announce it to her husband.

"Pray accept my best wishes," said the young woman ; "but what now becomes of your motto, '*Ante Annia Musae*' ?"

"I must alter it a little and say '*Omnia ante Musas*.'" "

"And do you understand that gibberish, child ?" said Barbara.

"The Muses must have leave of absence for the present," Maria gaily replied to the young man's remark. Janus was amused at the prompt reply.

"How gay and pleased you look !" he exclaimed. "In these hard times a cheerful face is a rare sight."

Maria coloured, hardly knowing how to take the young Baron's remark, for he was a man who could disguise blame under a jest ; but she replied with frank sincerity :

"Do not think me frivolous or indifferent, Jonker. I know what grave times these are ; but I have just gone through a private self-examination, and I found much to blame in my conscience ; but, on the other hand, I

have a sincere purpose of replacing it by something better."

"Well and good!" replied Dousa. "I knew that in your schools at Delft you had attached yourself to my friends the Ancients. 'Know thyself' was the highest teaching of the Greeks, and you very wisely obey it. All silent confession,—all aspiration after self-purification,—must begin with self-knowledge; and if in the process we find things which are little flattering to the beloved 'I'—if we have the courage to see ourselves as hideous as we see others——"

"Then we are horrified, and have already taken the first step towards something better."

"Nay, good Dame; then we are already standing on a higher level. After many hours of deep reflection, Socrates confessed—do you know what?"

"Yes; that he knew nothing. Well, I made quicker work of coming to the same conclusion."

"And the Christian learns it at school," said Barbara, anxious to have her share in the conversation. "All knowledge is but in part."

"And we are all sinners," added Dousa. "It is easy to say, good mother; and it is easy to believe when it applies to other folks. 'He is a sinner,' is soon pronounced, but 'I am a sinner,' sticks in the throat; and he who can own it in anguish in the stillness of his chamber will find some white feathers of an angel's pinions mingling with the blackness of the devil's wings. Forgive me! but these are days when everything a man says or thinks is bitter earnest. Mars is with us, and the gentle Muses are silent. Greet your husband from me, and tell him that Allertssohn's body has been brought in, and that he will be buried to-morrow."

Van der Does departed, and Maria, after visiting her patient, whom she found well and cheerful, sent Adrian and Liesje into the garden by the walls to gather flowers and greenery, that she might weave them into garlands for the bier of the brave Captain. Meanwhile, she herself went to visit his widow.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE Burgomaster's wife returned home shortly before dinner. Outside her house she found a motley assembly of bearded and moustachioed warriors, who were endeavouring to make themselves understood in English by two or three of the town watch, and who, when these functionaries saluted Dame Maria, followed their example, respectfully raising their hands to their helmets.

She returned their greeting civilly, and entered the hall, into which the midday sun was pouring through the door, which stood wide open. Peter had assigned quarters to these English soldiers, and, after consulting with the new commandant, Jan van der Does, had appointed them to companies. They were now evidently waiting for some of their comrades, for when the young woman put her foot on the lowest step and looked up, she saw that at the top of the narrow stairs her way was barred by the tall figure of a soldier. His back was towards her, and he was showing Liesje his dark velvet beretta, decorated with what a herald would call an "embattled border," above which waved a handsome, light-blue ostrich feather. The child seemed to have made great friends with the soldier, for although he was refusing her something, the little girl was laughing happily. Maria stood undecided for a moment,

but as the child made a snatch at the gay head-gear and set it on her own curls, she thought she ought to check her, and called up to her :

"But, Liesje, that is not a plaything !"

The soldier turned round, stood puzzled for a moment, shaded his eyes with his hand, and then leaped down the steps to meet Dame van der Werff. She had started back in surprise ; however, he gave her no time for reflection, but held out both his hands, and cried eagerly, with delight sparkling in his eyes : "Maria ! Mistress Maria ! You here ! This is a day of good fortune."

The young woman had at once recognised the soldier, and put her hand frankly into his, but not altogether without confusion. The soldier's clear blue eyes sought to meet hers, but she looked down and said :

"I am not as I was then—the girl is now the mistress of a family."

"The mistress of a family ! How dignified that sounds. And yet—and yet you are still Mistress Maria. Not a hair has altered. At the wedding at Delft you held your head down in just the same way—lifted your hands, cast down your eyes, and always had that same lovely blush."

The tone and accent in which he spoke, with a gay freedom that was almost boyish, had something in them which attracted Maria as much as his confident manner annoyed her. She raised her head with a hasty impulse, looked steadily in the young officer's handsome face, and said with some dignity :

"You see only the outside, Baron von Dornburg. Within, three years have wrought great changes."

"Baron von Dornburg !" he repeated, shaking his long curly hair ; "in Delft I was Jonker Georg. Things must have gone very differently with us, fair Dame ; for see, my

moustache has grown considerably—though not very long ; I am broader than I was ; and the sun has burnt my pink-and-white boy's face to a good brown ; in short, my outer man is greatly changed, but here—within—nothing has altered from what it was three years since."

Maria felt the blood mounting again to her cheeks, but she was determined not to blush, and answered hastily :

"To stand still is to go backwards, so you have lost three good years, Baron von Dornburg."

The officer gazed at Maria in astonishment, and then said, more gravely than before :

"Your play of wit strikes home more than you think ; I had hoped to find you in Delft again, but we ran short of ammunition in Alfen, and the Spaniards may reach your native town sooner than we shall. A happy fate has thrown you in my way here ; but,—let me be frank,—when I hope and wish a thing, my fancy brings it visibly before my eyes, and I hear it with my ears ; and whenever I have thought of our meeting again I have dreamed that you might put both your hands into mine—that you would greet me, not with sharp words, but would say, 'Do you still remember those we have lost?' Was I not your companion in some happy bygone hours, and our Leonhard's closest friend ? And then I fancied that when I should answer, 'Yes, indeed ; I have never forgotten them !' the soft fire of your eyes—ah ! now I may thank you ! I see those bright stars twinkling through the crystal moisture. You are not so much altered as you fancy, Dame Maria ; and if I remember the past in all loyalty, can you blame me?"

"Certainly not," she answered warmly ; "and now that you speak thus to me, I will gladly call you Jonker Georg again, and invite you, as my friend and Leonhard's, into our house."

"That is well, and I am glad of it," he said eagerly. "I have so much to ask you; and as to myself—Good Heavens! I wish I had less to tell."

"Have you seen my husband?" asked Maria.

"I do not know a soul in Leyden," he replied, "excepting the learned and hospitable host of my Inn and the Doge of this many-ditched and many-bridged little Venice." He pointed up the stairs, and Maria coloured as she answered:

"The Burgomaster van der Werff is my husband."

The young man was silent for a minute; then he said hastily:

"He received me most kindly. And that sweet little elf?"

"She is his child by a former marriage, but mine too now. What makes you call her an elf?"

"Because she looks as if she had been born among white blossoms in the moonlight, and because the reflection of the morning glow, from which the elfs flee away, tinged her cheeks when I caught her."

"She has had that name given her already," said Maria. "Now, may I take you up to my husband?"

"Not at present, Dame van der Werff, for I must look after my men out there, but to-morrow, if you will allow me."

"I will tell my husband all about you. Till to-morrow then, Jonker Georg."

Maria found the steaming dishes standing on the dinner-table, but the family had waited for her. Flushed with her walk in the midday sun, and excited by her unexpected meeting with the young German, she opened her husband's study door, exclaiming, as she went in:

"Forgive me! I was detained. It is very late, I am afraid."

"We were very willing to wait," he said kindly, and going up to her. Suddenly all her new resolutions rushed into her mind, and for the first time since their marriage she raised her husband's hand to her lips. He smilingly withdrew it, kissed her forehead, and then said :

"It is good to have you here—very good."

"Ay, is it not?" she said, with a playful gesture of reproof.

"But now we are all at home, and dinner is waiting."

"Come along, then," she exclaimed brightly. "Do you know whom I met below on the steps?"

"Some English soldiers."

"Yes, but with them the Jonker von Dornburg."

"He had been to see me. A smart young fellow with a very winning frankness; a German from the Protestant provinces."

"And Leonhard's dearest friend. Do you not remember? I must surely have told you about him. Our visitor at the time of Jacoba's wedding."

"To be sure, Jonker Georg! It was he who before that broke that vicious bay horse for the Prince's equerry."

"That was a bold adventure," said Maria, with a deep breath.

"The bay goes capitally to this day," answered Peter. "Leonhard thought that with all his talents and accomplishments the Baron might lift the world off its axis—I remember it very well—and now the poor fellow has to sit still within these walls and let us feed him. How did he happen to join the English and come out here?"

"I do not know; he only told me he had had many adventures."

"That I can well believe. He is living at the

Exchange Inn ; but perhaps we can find a room for him in the side-wing across the courtyard."

"No, Peter !" she exclaimed hastily ; "there is not any room there in fit order."

"That we will see later. Ask him to dine with us to-morrow at any rate, and he may be able to tell us something. There is good stuff in the Jonker ; he begged me not to let him remain idle, but always to make him of use in some service. Jan van der Does will soon find the right place for him, for our new commandant can see what men are made of."

Barbara now joined in the conversation, and Peter, although it was but a work-day, ordered up a flagon of wine instead of beer as usual, and this day a thing happened which had not occurred for weeks. The master of the house remained at table with his family a full quarter of an hour after the remains of the dinner had been removed, and told them of the rapid movements of the Spaniards, of the miserable fate of the renegade English who had been disarmed and sent off in detachments, of the resistance at Alfen, to the very death, by the company to which Jonker Georg belonged, and of another severe battle in which Don Gaytan, the best of Valdez' officers and his very right hand, was said to have been killed. Messengers could still come and go by the road to Delft, but by to-morrow, it was said, that too would be occupied by the enemy. Whenever he spoke he addressed himself to Maria, excepting when Barbara directly questioned him, and when at last he rose from table, he ordered that a good joint should be roasted for the morrow in honour of the guest he himself intended to invite. Hardly had he closed the door of his room when tiny Elizabeth flew to Maria, and, clasping her knees with her arms, looked up and asked her :

"Say, little mother; Jonker Georg is the tall captain with a blue feather who ran downstairs so fast to meet you?"

"Yes, child."

"And he is coming to dinner to-morrow! Adrian, he is coming!"

She clapped her hands with delight, and ran to Barbara, shouting once more:

"Aunt Bärbel, do you hear? he is coming!"

"Blue feather and all!" answered her aunt.

"Yes, and he has curly hair—long curls like Assendelft's little Clara. May I go up to Cousin Henrika?"

"By and by, perhaps," said Maria. "But now, children, bring me your flowers, and separate them neatly from the green sprays. Truitje will bring us some hoops and thread, and we will make the wreaths."

Jonker Georg's words, that it was a lucky day, seemed likely to come true; for the young hostess found Henrika in good spirits and free from pain. She had the doctor's leave to walk up and down the room, and had been sitting for a long time at the open window; she had enjoyed a chicken, and when Maria entered the room, was resting, in the delicious sense of growing strength, in her well-stuffed easy chair. Her friend congratulated her on her improved looks, and told her how pleased she was with her appearance.

"I can return the compliment," replied Henrika. "You look as bright as good luck itself. What has happened to please you?"

"Me? oh! my husband was more cheerful than usual, and had a great deal to tell us at dinner. But I only came just to ask after you; good-bye again for the present. The children and I have a melancholy task in hand."

"The children? What can the Elf and Signor Salvatore have to do with anything melancholy?"

"Allertssohn, the poor Captain, is to be buried to-morrow, and we are going to twine some wreaths for the coffin."

"To twine wreaths! Oh, I could show you how to do that. Here, Truitje, take away my plate and call the children."

The maid did as she was desired, but Maria anxiously remarked:

"You are trying to do too much again, Henrika."

"I? to-morrow I shall sing. It is all my preserver's potion; it works wonders, I tell you. Have you enough flowers and oak sprays?"

"I should think so!"

As Maria spoke the door opened, and Liesje came softly into the room, treading on tiptoe as she had been enjoined; she came up to Henrika and let her kiss her, and then exclaimed eagerly:

"Cousin Henrika—do you know—Jonker Georg, with his blue feather, is coming again to-morrow to have dinner with us?"

"Jonker Georg?" asked the girl.

Maria answered for the child, saying, in some confusion:

"Baron von Dornburg, an officer who came into the city with the English. I told you of him—a German—an old acquaintance of mine. Go, Liesa, and sort the flowers with Adrian; I will come in a few minutes and help you."

"But up here—in Cousin Henrika's room!" entreated the child.

"Yes, my Elf, here; and mother and I will make the loveliest wreath you ever saw in your life."

The child ran off, and in her delight forgot to shut the door gently.

Maria sat looking out of the window; her friend watched her in silence for some minutes, and at last exclaimed :

"One word, Dame Maria ! What is going on down there in the courtyard ? Nothing ! And what has become of your bright looks all of a sudden ? You do not usually have swarms of guests in your house ; why, then, did you wait for Liesje to tell me of Jonker Georg's arrival—the German, your friend of former days ?"

"Oh, Henrika, drop the question !"

"No, no—do you know what I think ? I believe the whirlwind of war has blown that young madcap to your doors with whom you spent so many delightful hours at the time of your sister's wedding. Now, am I right or wrong ? You need not blush so scarlet."

"It is he," Maria answered gravely. "But, if you love me, forget all that I told you about him ; or at any rate deny yourself the idle pleasure of alluding to it, for if you do you will hurt me very much."

"How should I ! you are the wife of another man."

"Of a man I love and honour, who trusts me entirely, and who himself invited the Baron into his house. I liked the young man and admired his talents, and was sorry and anxious when he risked his life as if it were a mere leaf flung upon the current of a river——"

"And now that you have seen him again, Maria ?——"

"Now I know what my duty is. Only let it be your care that my peace of mind in doing it is not disturbed by your idle words."

"Certainly it shall not be, Maria. Still, I am curious about this young knight and his singing. Unfortunately

we shall not have the opportunity of being together much longer. I must go home."

"The Doctor will not let you travel yet."

"It is all the same; I shall go as soon as I feel well enough. My father is forbidden to enter the town, but your husband can do much, and I must speak with him."

"Will you see him to-morrow?"

"The sooner the better, for he is your husband, and the very ground here seems to burn under my feet."

"Oh!" Maria exclaimed.

"It sounds very dismal, I know," said Henrika. "But need I tell you that it is hard to leave you? However, I am not gone yet. But my sister Anna is now a widow—thank God! I might say, though she is in want and entirely forlorn. I must see my father, to speak to him about her, and quit this quiet haven to go out into the storm."

"My husband shall come to you," said Maria.

"That is well; now, children, come in; lay the flowers on that table. You, Elfing, sit down prettily on the stool; and you, Salvatore, hand me the flowers. But what is this! I really believe the young rascal has been anointing his curls with scented oil—in my honour! Thanks, my preserver!—We do not want the hoops just yet; first we must make little bunches, and then we will tie them to the wood with some greenery. Now, sing a song as we work, Maria. The first; but I can bear it to-day."

CHAPTER XXIII.

HALF Leyden had followed the gallant Captain to the grave, and among the soldiers who paid this last mark of respect to the brave man was Georg van Dornburg. After the funeral Wilhelm took the son of his deeply regretted and worthy comrade home to his own house.

Van der Werff, though after the solemn ceremony was over he found much waiting to be done, would not sacrifice the dinner hour, as he expected the German. He sat as usual at the head of his table; the Baron sat on one side of it, between him and Maria, and opposite to Barbara and the children. The widow was never tired of gazing at the young man's fresh, bright face, for there was something frank and honest in the Jonker's eyes which reminded her of her son, though her Wilhelm was not to be compared to their guest in point of good looks.

Many a question had already been asked and answered as they ate, and many a tender reminiscence revived, when Peter, after the table had been cleared, and a fresh jug of better wine brought in, filled the Jonker's glass and then lifted his own.

"We will drink this glass," said he, with a glance of sincere regard and welcome at Georg, "to the triumph of the good cause for which you, of your own free will, have

drawn the sword. Thank you for your hearty response—even drinking is an art, and one of which the Germans are masters.”

“It is to be learnt in various places, and not last nor least at the University of Jena.”

“All honour to the doctors and professors who turn out such proficient in it as my late brother-in-law, and, to judge from the present instance, as you yourself.”

“Nay, Leonhard was my superior in the *ars bibendi*—but ah! how long ago!”

“Youth is not generally easily satisfied,” replied Peter, “but in the matter of years it is apt to call them many when old folks think them but few. To be sure, many events may have been crowded into the last years of your life. I can still spare a little time, and as we are so comfortably seated and all here together for once, you might relate to us now—unless you would rather be silent on the subject—how you came to quit your distant home and find yourself in Holland, and why you left your Greek and Latin to march under the English flag.”

“Yes, indeed,” added Maria with frank ease; “you owe me such an account of yourself. Say grace, children, and be off with you.”

Adrian looked beseechingly first at his mother and then at his father, and as neither of them forbade their remaining, he drew his chair close up to his little sister's, and with their heads close together and wide-open eyes, they listened to the Jonker as he told his story, at first with some indifference, but with increasing eagerness as he went on.

“You know I am a native of Thuringia, a mountainous province in the heart of Germany. Our town lies in a pretty valley through which a clear river tumbles with

many windings. Wooded mountains—not so high as the giants of Switzerland, but not small ones either—enclose the little dale; their bases chequered with fields and meadows and their heights covered with firs which, like the huntsman, are dressed in green the whole year round. In winter, to be sure, the snow covers them in a shroud of sparkling white, but when spring returns the firs put forth young shoots as fresh and tender as the sprouting buds of your oaks and beeches; and then it is in the meadows by the stream and under soft warm breezes that the snow appears; for the fruit trees bloom one after another, and when the wind blows the gleaming pale blossoms fly before it like white flakes, and fall on the gay flowers in the grass and on the clear surface of the stream. There are bare cliffs, too, on many of the higher parts of the mountains, and where they stand up, steep and inaccessible, our forefathers have built fortresses to protect themselves against the incursions of their foes. Our castle stands on a ridge in the midst of the valley of the Saale. There I was born, there I played away my early years, learnt to read the Bible and to use my pen. There was plenty of hunting in the forests, and we had good horses in the stable, and I was a wild child and rarely went to school of my own free will; our venerable master Lorenz had to catch me first when he wanted me. My sisters and Hans, the youngest of us—he was only three years younger than I was—were submissive enough; I had an older brother too, and yet, as I may say, I had not; for hardly had his beard begun to show when our sovereign duke appointed him squire to the Ritter von Brand, and he was sent to Spain to buy Andalusian horses. Johann Friedrich's father, of happy memory, had learnt their value in Madrid after the battle of Mühlburg. Ludwig was a fine young fellow when he

went, and even then he could break in the wildest horse. It was a bitter grief to our parents to think of him as dead, but years went by, and as neither he nor his master ever was seen again, we had to give them up for lost. Only my mother never would believe it, and was always expecting him to come home. My father called me the future Baron, and his heir. When I was old enough to have lost my boy's voice, and could construe Cicero after a fashion, I was sent to the High School at Jena to study law, with a view to becoming a member of the Imperial Council, in accordance with the wishes of my uncle the Chancellor.

"Oh, Jena! beloved Jena! There are certain delicious days in May and June, when only the lightest clouds float in the sky, and every leaf is so green, every flower so fresh and bright, that one might think—and perhaps they fancy it themselves—that they could never fade and fall; well, in the life of a man—at any rate of a German—the happy time when he is a student answers to those delightful days in spring. You can believe it, I daresay, for Leonhard must have told you much about Jena. He knew how to combine work with pleasure; I, on the contrary, learnt little on the wooden forms, for, truth to tell, I rarely sat on them, and the dust of books had no chance of choking my lungs; but I read Ariosto again and again; I was a diligent student of music, and in some of my wildest fits of excitement I wrote many songs, to my own great satisfaction. A man learns to use his sword, too, in Jena, and I should have liked to cross swords once with your famous fencer Allertssohn, of whom I have heard you speak. Leonhard was older than I, and he had attained the dignity of Master of Laws before I had got far into the Pandects. But we were always one in heart and soul, and so it happened that I came to Holland with him to his

wedding. Ah! that was a time! Our doctors of theology at Jena have squabbled heartily as to where on earth the garden of Paradise may have been. But I always thought them a parcel of fools, for, said I, there is but one Eden, and that is in Holland; and the sweetest roses the dew ever falls on in the early morning sunshine, blossom in Delft."

As he spoke Georg shook his long curls, and then suddenly paused in some confusion, but as no one interrupted him, and he caught sight of Barbara's eager face and the children's flush of excitement, he went on again less fervidly.

"So I went home again, and had to learn for the first time that the sunniest days in our life often end in a storm. I found my father ill, and a very few days after my return he closed his eyes for ever. I had never before seen any one die; and the first, the very first, was my father."

Von Dornburg paused, deeply moved, and passed his hand across his eyes.

"Your father!" said Barbara, breaking the silence in a voice of genuine sympathy; "if one may judge of a tree by its fruit, he must have been a splendid man."

The young man looked up again at these words, and his eyes sparkled as he said:

"Take all that is noble and combine it to form the tall and handsome figure of a man, and you will have the image of my father; and if I could only describe my mother——"

"She is still alive?" asked Peter.

"Please God!" cried the Jonker. "But for the last two months I have heard nothing of my family; it is very hard. Flowers grow by every roadside, and I like my work as a soldier, but it is often a great trouble to me to get so

little news from home. Oh, if one were but a bird, or a sunbeam, or a wandering star, if it were only for an instant, for the winking of an eye, I could then see how things are with those at home, and lift up my soul in thankfulness, or, if—but I will not think of that. At this very moment the trees are blossoming and the flowers springing in a thousand meadows in the valley of the Saale, exactly as they are doing here, and as they did two years since when I left home for the second time.

“After my father’s death I was his heir, but neither hunting, nor riding to court, nor singing, nor the clink of the glass, could please me. I went about as if half asleep, and I felt as if I had no right to be happy without my father. Then one day—just two years ago—a messenger brought a letter from Weimar, which had arrived with despatches from Italy to his most Serene Highness our Duke, and this contained news no less important than that our lost brother Ludwig was still alive, but sick in a hospital at Bergamo. A good Sister had written for him, and we now learnt that he had been taken prisoner by pirates on the voyage from Valencia to Livorno, and carried off to Tunis. All the sufferings he had there endured and all the dangers he had gone through, before he at last succeeded in escaping, you may perhaps care to hear some day. He had got to Italy on board a Genoese galley; he had then dragged himself on foot as far as Bergamo, but he could get no farther, and was now lying ill—dying, perhaps—among strangers, though kind-hearted ones. I set out without delay, and did not spare my horse on the way to Bergamo; and though there was much that was strange and beautiful to be seen by the way, I took little pleasure in it all, for the thought of my dying brother always and everywhere saddened my mood and spoilt my enjoyment.

Every running stream seemed to urge me to haste, and the mountain wall rose before me like an ominous barrier in my way. Once on the other side of the St. Gotthard my spirits rose, and as I rode down from Bellinzova to the Lake of Lugano, and the mirror-like waters lay spread out in front of the town, smiling up at me like a bright blue eye, I forgot my anxiety for a while, and waved my hat and sang a snatch of a song.

“At Bergamo I found my brother, alive indeed, but utterly broken in mind and body—wasted, and without any care or wish to bear the burden of life any longer. He had, however, been in good hands, and in the course of a few weeks we were able to travel home—this time we took the beautiful road through the Tyrol. Ludwig’s strength increased daily, but the wings of his spirit had been broken and crippled by suffering. For years he had been digging in the fierce sunshine, or carrying burdens with fetters on his ankles. His master, the Ritter Brand, had soon succumbed to this dreadful fate, and Ludwig had forgotten alike how to laugh or to cry in Tunis, and who shall say which we can best dispense with?

“Even when he saw his mother again he could not shed a tear, and yet his whole body trembled with emotion, and his heart too, you may be sure. He is still master at our castle; but he is an old man in the prime of his years, and though he gets on very well in his daily life, he cannot bear the sight of a strange face. I had quite a battle with him, for by right and law the castle and land belong to him as the eldest, and he wanted to give up his rights and put me in his place. When he gained over my mother to his side, and my uncle and brothers and sisters endeavoured to persuade me to do as he wished, I remained firm. I will have nothing to do with what does not concern me, and

our next brother Wolfgang is grown up, and can quite well take my place when necessary. At last, when I had had too much of entreaties and arguments, I saddled my horse again and rode off into the world. My mother could hardly bear to let me go; but I had tasted the joys of a wandering life, and rode off as if I were starting to be married. Indeed, to be perfectly honest, I gave up the castle and estate as an onerous burden. As free once more as the winds and clouds, I took the same road as I had ridden along with Leonhard, for a war after my own heart was being fought in your country, and my future lot was to depend on my sword. At Cologne I placed myself under the standard of Louis of Nassau, and I fought with him at Mooker Heyde—fought till not a man could stand his ground any longer. My horse was killed, my buff coat torn, my knapsack lost, and hardly anything was left to me but a stout heart and a hope for better days. These soon dawned, for Captain Gensfort invited me to join the English troops. I was his ensign, and at Alfen I stood by his side till our last charge of powder was spent. How things went after that you know.”

“And Captain van der Laen,” Peter put in, “has told us that he owes his life to you. You fought like a lion.”

“Well, it was warm work no doubt by the fort, and yet neither I nor my horse had a hair singed; and this time I brought away my knapsack and all my baggage. Fortune, like a mother, loves her graceless children best, and so she has brought me to you and yours, Burgomaster.”

“I can only beg you,” said Peter, “to account yourself as one of my family; we have two pleasant rooms across the courtyard, and they shall be set in order for you if you like to make use of them.”

"With pleasure," said the Baron ; and Peter, offering him his hand, went on :

"My duties call me away, but you can tell the women what you will require, and when you think you will take possession. The sooner the better, so far as we are concerned. Is it not so, Maria?"

"Indeed you are very welcome, Jonker Georg. Now I must go and see the invalid we are nursing here ; Barbara will attend to your wishes."

And Maria, taking her husband's hand, quitted the room with him. The widow, left alone with their visitor, did her best to find out all he could wish for, and then followed her sister-in-law, whom she found with Henrika.

"Ah !" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, "that is a man indeed ! Mistress Henrika, I am an old woman, and I can tell you I never yet saw such another. Brave, tender, and then so handsome ! When fortune bestows her gifts she does it in bushels, and 'he that hath, to him shall it be given.' True words—golden words, these !"

CHAPTER XXIV.

PETER had promised Henrika that he would petition the council to provide her with an escort. It was a hard wrench to leave the Burgomaster's house. Maria's sweet nature had done her good ; she felt as if her respect for her sex generally had risen in her society. Yesterday, too, Maria had sung to her, and her voice was like everything else about her. Every note was pure and clear as a bell, and it was a grief to her that for the present she was forbidden to join her voice to her friend's in part-singing. She was sorry, too, to leave the children. Still, go she must, if only for Anna's sake ; for her father was not to be moved by anything she could say by letter. If she had written her appeal for forgiveness for his outcast child, he would scarcely have read it to the end. By speech at some favourable moment she might be more likely to touch him ; she must speak to him, though she shuddered at the thought of her life at home in his castle, particularly as she could but confess to herself that she was anything rather than indispensable to her father. To secure a fortune, he had delivered her over to a hell-on-earth existence with her aunt ; while she was lying sick unto death he had gone off to a tourney ; and a letter she had received from him only yesterday contained nothing but the information

that he had been outlawed from the town, and an injunction to proceed forthwith to the house of Baron de Heuter, at the Hague. Enclosed in it there was a safe-conduct from Valdez, the Spanish commander-in-chief, requiring all King Philip's officers and men-at-arms to care for her safety. The Burgomaster had proposed that she should be carried in a litter, escorted by a flag of truce as far as the Spanish lines, and the doctor raised no further objections to her setting out. She hoped to start this very day.

She was sitting dreaming in the bow window that looked out upon the courtyard. Some of the windows of the side buildings to the east were set wide open; Truitje must have got up early, for she came out of the rooms which had been made ready for the Baron, followed by a young girl carrying a quantity of pails and cleaning apparatus. Then came Janke with a large easy-chair on his head, and Liesje called out to him :

"That is Aunt Bärbel's grandfather's chair. What will she sleep in now of an afternoon?"

Henrika heard the question, and her thoughts turned to the worthy old woman, "Babetta," who had such warm and tender feeling, and then to Maria, and to the man who was presently to take up his quarters in those rooms. Did not the old tie which had bound the Burgomaster's wife to the handsome Jonker still hold them together by a few slender threads? She shuddered to think of it. Poor Master Peter! poor Maria! Was she doing right to leave the young woman, who had held out a hand to her at her utmost need, at this very juncture? And yet how much less near to her was this stranger than her beloved sister! Every day she allowed herself to spend in this peaceful retreat had seemed to her to be stolen from Anna, ever since she had found a letter

addressed to her husband—the only one she had read of those contained in d'Avila's portfolio—in which she told him that she was ill, and that she and her child were in absolute want.

Here help was needed indeed, and none but she could give it.

She packed her things with Maria's and Barbara's assistance ; by midday all was ready for the start, and she would not be hindered from dining to-day for the first time with the family in the eating-room. Peter was not coming home to dinner, so she sat in his place, and tried to conceal the grief and pain that filled her soul under forced and noisy gaiety. As evening came on, Maria and the children went up to her room with her, and she made them bring up a harp that she might sing. At first, her deep voice failed her on many notes, but just as snow when it is slipping down a mountain slope to the plain below, falls slowly at first, pausing as it glides, but quickly grows in mass and force, and gains solidity and roundness, so her low tones gradually swelled in fulness and enchanting power, and when at length she leaned the harp against the wall and sank exhausted on her chair, Maria seized her hand, and said with deep emotion :

“Henrika, stay with us.”

“I must not,” answered the girl. “Besides, you are enough for each other. Shall I take you with me, children?”

Adrian looked down, puzzled ; but Liesje flung herself into Henrika's lap, exclaiming :

“Where are you going to ? oh ! stay, do stay with us.”

There was a tap at the door, and Peter came into the room. It was easy to see at once that he brought no good tidings. The council had refused his application. Van

Bronkhorst had been almost unanimously supported when he proposed that Mistress Henrika van Hoogstraten, as being related to one of the most distinguished adherents of the Spaniards among the nobles of Holland, should be detained within the walls of the town. If they should be driven to surrender, though her presence would scarcely protect them against fire and sword, it might secure some consideration for the leaders.

Peter's objections had met with no attention, and he now honestly told Henrika of the battle he had fought for her, and begged her to take patience and to be content to remain in his house as a most welcome guest.

She interrupted him with many vehement expressions of indignation and wrath, but presently grew calmer.

"You!" she cried, "you—yes I will gladly stay with you—but you know what it is that this base act of violence prevents my doing. Besides, to be a prisoner—to live on for weeks, months, without mass and without confession! Still, first and last, good heavens! what will become of my unhappy sister?"

Maria looked pathetically at her husband, and Peter said:

"If you are pining for the consolations of your religion, I will send Father Damianus to you, and you can hear mass at the Carmelite Sisters', hard by, as often as you please. We are not fighting against your faith, only for the free exercise of every creed, and the whole town is open to you. My wife can better help you to bear your trouble about your sister than I can, but allow me to assure you, once for all, that whenever and however I may be able to help you, I will do it, and not with words alone." As he spoke he held out his hand to Henrika, who gave him hers, saying as she did so:

"I owe you many thanks, and know it well, but let me beg you to leave me now, and give me till to-morrow to think it over."

"Is there no hope of changing the decision of the council?" Maria asked.

"No, certainly none."

"Well, then," she said firmly, "you must remain with us. The thought of your sister does not trouble you alone, but disturbs me too. Let us first consider what can be done for her. How about the roads to Delft?"

"They are cut off, and by to-morrow, or the day after, not a soul will be able to pass."

"Then collect your ideas, Henrika, and let us try whatever is still left open to us."

Then began questions and discussion, and Henrika gazed in astonishment at the gentle young wife, for she, with unfailing decisiveness and acumen, took the lead in their consultation. It seemed finally that the surest way would be to send a trustworthy messenger that very day with some money to Anna d'Avila, to bring her, if possible, back to Holland. The Burgomaster expressed himself willing to advance out of his own pocket a portion of the legacy left to Henrika's sister by their aunt, which, though sequestered for the present, was certain to be paid ultimately, and he took his guest's gratitude very unaffectedly.

But whom could they send? Henrika thought of Wilhelm the organist, since he was already a friend of her sister's.

"But he is under arms," said the Burgomaster. "I know him well. In this time of peril he will certainly not quit the town; not for his own mother!"

"But I know the right person," said Maria; "we will send Jonker Georg."

"That is well thought of!" cried Peter. "We shall find him at his inn at this hour. I must go to see Van Hout, and he lives close to the Exchange Inn. I will send the German to you; my time is limited, and fair ladies can do more to persuade a young fellow than an elderly man ever can. Now, farewell, mistress, and once more I say, we are happy in having you for our guest."

When the Burgomaster had left the room, Henrika spoke.

"How quickly everything has come about, and how differently from what I had expected! I love you—I am grateful to you; but to be a prisoner, a prisoner! The walls will seem to close in upon me, and the ceiling to crush me. Ought I to be glad, ought I to despair? I know not. You, Maria, have great influence over the Baron; tell him about Anna; appeal to his feelings, and if he would indeed set out it would be the best thing for us both."

"For you and your sister, you mean," said Maria, with an evasive gesture of her hand. "Here is the lamp; when Jonker Georg comes, you shall see me again."

Maria withdrew to her own room, and threw herself on a couch, but she soon started up again, and began walking restlessly up and down. Presently she flung up her arms, her hands clasped in supplication, and cried aloud:

"Oh, he must go—he must go! Merciful God! loving, pitiful Father in Heaven, send him every happiness, every blessing, but leave me my peace of mind. Take him away; lead him far, far away from hence."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE Exchange Inn stood in the Breede Straat, and was a fine tall house with a large courtyard, in which a number of vehicles were standing. To the left of the entrance was a large room, not closed by any door, but entered through a high archway. Here sat the drivers and other folks of that class over their beer or wine, making no objection when mine host's cocks and hens perched on the benches, or even flew up on to the table ; here, by the wide hearthplace, vegetables were washed, and boiling and roasting were performed ; here, not uncommonly, the stout hostess was compelled to call in the assistance of her buxom maids and the tapster when her customers fell to fisticuffs, or a toper had had too much good liquor. Here, too, tobacco was smoked—a newly imported fashion—only, it is true, by a few sailors who had served on board Spanish vessels ; but Dame van Aken could not bear the pungent vapour, and kept the window open, where blossoming pinks and tall balsams stood, and cages hung with bright-coloured goldfinches.

On the opposite side of the entrance there were two closed rooms. Over the door of the first, neatly carved in wood, was this line from Horace :—

“ Ille terrarum mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet.”

To this room, which was long and narrow, only a few guests of distinction were admitted ; it was panelled with wood throughout, and from the centre of the richly carved ceiling a quaint picture in gaudy colouring looked down, representing the host of the inn. The worthy man, with a clean-shaved face, tightly-closed lips, and a nose so straight that it might have served as a guide for its owner's etching-needle, sat on a throne, dressed as a Roman warrior, while Vulcan and Bacchus, Minerva and Pomona, offered him gifts. Klaus van Aken, or, as he much preferred to be called, Nikolaus Aquanus, was indeed a remarkable man, who had been well endowed by more than one of the Olympian powers, and who, besides attending to his business, devoted himself zealously to learning, and to more than one branch of art. He was a clever silversmith, a die-cutter and engraver of considerable skill, and at the same time a great connoisseur in coins, and a diligent student and collector of antiquities. His little inn-parlour was at the same time a museum ; on the shelves which ran all round it were rare and curious objects of every kind in great numbers, and admirably arranged : old tankards and jugs ; coins, large and small ; gems in carefully locked glass cases ; antique lamps in clay and bronze ; fragments of stone with ancient Roman inscriptions ; Italian and Greek terra-cottas ; carved marbles that he had picked up among ruins in Italy—such as the head of a faun, an arm, a foot, and other fragments of antique statuary ; a fine enamelled reliquary of Byzantine workmanship ; and another, also enamel, from Limoges. Part of a Roman breastplate and a piece of mosaic from some Roman bath were here too, and among these antiquities stood some slender Venetian glasses, pine-cones, and ostrich's eggs. Such another inn-room was hardly to be found in all Holland, and the wine, too, was exceptionally

good, which was served to the guests by a neat waitress, and poured out of quaintly-formed flagons into finely-wrought glasses. In this room too Master Aquanus was wont to entertain his guests himself; in that on the opposite side his wife ruled the roast.

This evening the "Angulus," as the pretty parlour was very commonly called, was as yet scantily occupied, for the sun had only just set; the candles, however, were already lighted. They were fixed on tall, three-branched iron candlesticks, of which every portion—from the slender shaft to the curved, twisted, and intertwining tendrils—had been wrought by the careful hand of Aquanus himself. Two or three elderly men were sitting at a table over their wine; at another were Captain van der Laen, a valiant Hollander in the English service, who had come into the town with the other defenders of Alfen, Wilhelm the musician, Jonker Georg, and the host of the inn, on whom he had been billeted.

"It is a real pleasure to meet with a man like you, Jonker," said Aquanus; "you have travelled with your eyes open, and what you tell me of Brescia excites my curiosity. I should like to have that inscription."

"I will bring it to you," replied the Baron; "for if the Spaniards do not send me off into the other world, I shall certainly cross the Alps again some day. Have you not found Roman antiquities here and there in your own country?"

"Yes, Baron; by the Roomburg Canal, on the site perhaps of the ancient Prætorium, and at Katwyk. Near Voorburg the *Forum Hadriani* probably stood; and from thence came the breastplate which I showed you."

"An old, battered thing, half eaten away by verdigris," exclaimed Georg, "and yet what thoughts rise up in our minds at the sight of it! Some Roman armourer may have

wrought it for the wandering Cæsar himself! When I see that old armour all Rome and its legions seem to rise before my eyes. Happy is he who, like you, Master Wilhelm, has seen the Tiber, and there gazed backwards from the present to the heroic age!"

"I should gladly visit Italy again in your company," replied Wilhelm.

"And I in yours."

"First, we must secure our freedom," said the musician. "If we succeed in that, every man will be his own master once more, and then—why should I conceal it?—nothing will tie me to Leyden."

"Your organ? And your father?" asked Aquanus.

"My brothers are content to sit here in the warm family nest," replied Wilhelm. "But I feel something stirring and driving in me——"

"Ay, we find rushing streams and stagnant waters on the face of the earth," interrupted Georg, "and in heaven there are fixed stars, while the planets cannot cease from wandering. So it is among men; some, like plants, love their native spot better than any other, while we, again, are birds of passage. Well, I like our sort best. To be sure, you need not go so far as Italy to hear fine singing. I heard just now a voice—such a voice!——"

"Where? you make me quite curious."

"In the courtyard of Van der Werff's house."

"It was the Burgomaster's wife."

"Oh no; her voice is quite different."

The Captain had risen as he spoke, and was looking at his host's treasures and curiosities, and he now paused in front of a circular panel on which the head of an ox was sketched in charcoal with extraordinary freedom, boldness, and truth.

"You have a fine head of cattle here," he said to Aquanus.

"Ay, and no less a man drew it than Frans Floris," replied Aquanus. "He came here once from Brussels, and called upon our Master Artjen. But the old man was out, so Floris took a piece of charcoal and drew this sketch with it. As soon as Artjen came in and saw the ox's head, he exclaimed: 'That was Frans Floris, or the devil!' This story—— but here comes his worship the Burgomaster. You are welcome, Master Peter! This is a rare honour."

All the company rose and greeted Van der Werff with respect, while Georg sprang up and offered him his seat. Peter accepted it, and sat down for a few minutes and drank a glass of wine, and then signed to the Baron to come with him into the street. There he briefly begged him to go to his—Van der Werff's—house, for a communication of importance was awaiting him there; and then the Burgomaster went on to Van Hout's house, which was close at hand.

Georg went as he was requested, in a mood of grave excitement. The "communication" could hardly come from any one but Maria, and what could she require of him at so late an hour? Had his worthy friend begun to regret having offered him rooms in his own house? He was to have taken possession of his new quarters early next morning—perhaps he was to be apprised of their change of purpose before it should be too late. Maria's manner when they had met was different from what it had formerly been—there was no doubt of that; but it was very natural that it should be. He had dreamed, it is true, of a very different meeting—ay, far different! He had come to Holland to uphold the good cause of the Prince of Orange; still he would have turned his horse's head towards Italy the

beloved, instead of northwards, if he had not hoped to find in Holland the woman he had never forgotten, and whom he had never ceased to long to see once more. Now she was the wife of another—of a man who had shown him kindness, and had treated him with simple confidence. To tear the love out of his heart was impossible ; but he owed it to her husband and to his own honour that he should stand firm, should smother every idea of making her his own, and be satisfied merely to see her—this at least he must try to carry out.

All this he had told himself, and more than once ; and yet he was conscious of treading a plank over an abyss, and that with an unsteady foot, when she met him at the dining-room door, and he felt how cold and tremulous her hand was as she took his.

She led the way, and he followed her in silence to Henrika's room. Henrika greeted him with a friendly nod ; both the women hesitated to speak the first words. He, however, after glancing round him, perceived that the room they were in faced the courtyard, and said eagerly :

"I was down below there just before sunset looking at my new quarters, and I heard here—up here in this room—a voice singing, and ah ! what singing ! At first I did not know what was coming, for the notes were husky, dull, and broken ; but then it made its way like a lava stream through ashes. I could almost wish many griefs to a singer who can lament in such tones."

"You must make acquaintance with the singer," said Maria, turning to the girl : "Mistress Henrika van Hoogstraten, our dear and esteemed guest."

"And it was you who were singing ?" asked Georg.

"Are you surprised ?" said Henrika. "It is true my voice has kept up its strength better than my body, which

is weakened by a long illness. I can feel how hollow my eyes must look, and how pale my cheeks must be. Singing no doubt eases pain, but I have long enough had to do without that consolation. For weeks not a note have I sung, and now my heart is so heavy that I could cry rather than sing. 'What does that matter to me?' no doubt you are thinking; but Maria encourages me to ask of you a really unheard-of knightly service."

"Speak, speak," cried Georg eagerly. "If Dame Maria claims it, and if I can do anything to serve you, gracious mistress, here I stand—command me as you will."

Henrika did not shun his open gaze.

"You must hear first," she said, "what it is that I require. And to begin with, you must submit to listen to a short history. But I am still very weak, and have tried my strength to-day rather severely; Maria must speak for me."

The young woman fulfilled the task quietly and clearly, ending with these words:

"I myself thought of the messenger we need—it must be you, Jonker Georg."

Henrika had not once interrupted her friend's narrative, but she now added with eager warmth:

"I never saw you till to-day, but I trust you entirely. Only a few hours since black was my colour, but if you will indeed be my true knight I will choose green, bright green, for I shall begin to be hopeful again. Will you venture on this ride for me?" Georg had sat till now with his eyes cast down to the ground; he now raised his head, saying:

"If I can get leave I place myself at your disposal; but my lady's colour is blue, and I can wear no other."

Henrika's lips twitched a little, but the young man went on : "Captain van der Laen is my superior officer. I will go and speak with him at once."

"And if he says no?" Maria asked. Henrika intercepted the answer :

"In that case," she said proudly, "I would beg you to send Wilhelm the musician to see me."

Georg bowed and went off to his inn.

As soon as the two women were alone, Henrika asked :

"Do you know who is the lady of the Baron von Dornburg?"

"How should I?" said Maria. "But now give yourself a little rest, Mistress. As soon as the Jonker returns I will bring him up to you."

She left the room and sat down with Barbara to her spinning-wheel; it was long before Georg returned. At last, at about midnight, he came back; not alone, however, but with two companions. It was not within the Captain's power to give him leave for so many weeks—for the journey to Lugano would take a long time; but the Baron had at once gone to consult with Wilhelm, and he had hit upon the right man for the task. The musician had soon come to an understanding with him, and had brought him with him without delay. It was Belotti, the old major-domo.

CHAPTER XXVI.

By noon on the following day there was a great stir on the spacious shooting-ground—still known as the Doelen—lying not far from the White Gate, between the Rapenburg and the town-wall; for the town-council had decreed that every citizen and inhabitant, without exception, whether poor or rich, humble or noble, should there take a solemn oath to remain faithful and devoted to the Prince and the good cause.

Under a clump of noble lime-trees, and dressed in holiday attire, stood the Prince's representative, Van Bronkhorst, the Burgomaster van der Werff, and two recorders, before whom the vast concourse of men, old, middle-aged, and young alike, were each to swear in turn. The solemn ceremony had not yet begun, when Janus Dousa, in full uniform as Commandant, with his breastplate over his buff leather gorget and his helmet on his head, came up, arm in arm with Van Hout, to Van der Werff and Van Bronkhorst.

"Here we see the same thing again!" he said. "Of the working-men and common townsfolk not a man is absent, but the gentlefolk in velvet and fur are poorly represented."

"They ought to be here by this time!" cried the Town-clerk angrily.

"What good will forced oaths do us?" asked the Burgomaster. "Those who care for freedom must fight for freedom. However, this day will show us in whom we may put our trust."

"Not a man of the town-guard is missing," said Van Bronkhorst. "That is good to see. But what is going on in the lime-tree?"

The friends looked up and spied Adrian, who was rocking in a bough of the tree, a hidden spectator of the scene.

"That boy must need be everywhere," cried Peter. "Come down, you imp of mischief! You are the very person I want."

The lad hung by his hands to a branch, and let himself drop on to his feet, and then came to stand before his father with a woebegone expression of rueful penitence, which he could put on on occasion. Peter, however, did not scold him, but desired him to run home to his mother, and tell her that it was no longer possible to send Belotti in safety through the Spanish lines, and also that Father Damianus had promised him to visit Mistress Henrika in the course of the day.

"Make haste, boy," he added; "and you, town-watchmen, keep everyone away from these trees, for the spot where men shall swear such an oath is holy ground. The ministers, I see, have seated themselves out there by the butts; they may come forward. Will you have the goodness to invite them to do so, Master van Hout? Domine Verstroot will give us a discourse, and then I myself should like to exhort the citizens to their duty, in a few words."

Van Hout went as he was requested, but before he had reached the preachers where they sat, Van Warmond

met him and informed him that an envoy, a smart young fellow, had arrived and requested to parley. He was now at the White Gate, and had a letter to deliver.

"From the General in command?"

"I do not know; but the youngster is a Dutchman, and I fancy that I know him."

"Bring him in; but he must be content to wait till the citizens have sworn. Then he may go and tell Valdez what he has seen and heard. It will be a good thing for the Castilians to know from the first what we really mean."

The Jonker went, and by the time he returned with Nicolas van Wibisma—for he was the envoy—Domine Verstroot's earnest exhortation was ended, and Van der Werff was addressing the people. The sacred fire of enthusiasm glowed in his eye, and the words he spoke in his deep and powerful tones to the assembled confederates, though few and simple, found their way straight to the hearts of his hearers. Nicolas, too, listened to his speech with a beating heart, and he felt as if the stalwart earnest man standing under the lime-tree spoke to him and him alone when, at the close, he raised his voice and exclaimed with a look of inspiration:

"And now come what may! A brave man, one of us, has said this very day, 'We will not yield so long as we have an arm left on our body wherewith to put food in our mouths and to wield the sword.' If we are all of this mind, twenty Spanish armies will meet death outside these walls. The freedom of Holland hangs on Leyden; if we waver and fail rather than face the dearth which to-day only threatens us, but which, ere long, will clutch us and torture us, our children will say of us: 'The men of Leyden were blind cowards. It is through their fault that the name of Hollander is esteemed no more highly than that of any

useful slave.' But if we hold out faithfully, and resist these dark invaders to the last man and to our last morsel of food, they will remember us with tears, and rejoice as they say 'To them we owe it that our brave, industrious, and happy nation can proudly hold its own with other nations, and need no longer suffer the foul cuckoo to dwell in its nest.' Whoever prizes honour, whoever is not a degenerate son, and a traitor to his father's house, whoever loves to be free rather than a slave,—before he raises his hand in attestation before God, let him shout with me : ' Long live our guardian genius, the Prince of Orange, and Holland's freedom ! ' ”

“ Long live Orange ! ” shouted and roared hundreds of loud manly voices, five times, ten times, after the Burgomaster. The High Constable fired off the mortars, which had been placed for the purpose near the butts ; drums rolled, and trumpet-calls sounded through the air ; bells rang out over the heads of the excited throng from every tower in the town, and the clamour never ceased till the Prince's Commissary gave the signal for the ceremony of taking the oath to begin.

The various guilds and the armed defenders of the town came up in companies to the lime-trees. There they held up their hands to swear, vehemently, no doubt, but with quiet dignity—nay, with devout uplifting of their minds ; and those who clasped hands did it with fervent purpose. Hour after hour went by before all had registered their oath ; and many a group who had gone up to swear together under the lime-tree pledged themselves a second time to each other out in the exercising ground, with a silent and mutual pressure.

Nicolas van Wibisma sat in silence by one of the shooting stands, just in front of the scene of the ceremony ;

his letter lay on his knees, and his heart swelled with sad and bitter feeling. Gladly could he have wept aloud, and have torn his father's missive across. Gladly would he have flown to join the noble Lord of Montfoort and the venerable Seigneur van der Does, as he saw them stand hand in hand to swear, and have taken the oath himself. He longed to cry out to the grave Burgomaster as he stood under the lime-trees :

"I—I am no degenerate son, nor a traitor to my father's house! I will never be a slave; I will not be a Spaniard. I am a Dutchman as much as you."

But he did not stir, he did not speak; he sat motionless till all was over, and Jonker van Warmond led him up to the lime-tree. There the Town-clerk and the two Barons van der Does had joined the officials, who received the oath. Nicolas bowed low, and silently handed his father's letter to the Burgomaster; Van der Werff opened it, and, after reading it, handed it to the others; then he said, turning to Nicolas :

"Wait here, Jonker. Your father urges us to surrender the town to the Spaniards, and promises us the King's clemency. You can have no doubt as to what the answer will be after what you have witnessed here."

"There is but one possible answer," said Van Hout, in the middle of reading; "tear the thing up, and say nothing."

"Ride home, and God be with you!" added Janus Dousa. "But stay—I will give you something for the Spanish Commander-in-chief."

"Then you vouchsafe no reply to my father's letter?" asked Nicolas.

"None, Jonker. We wish to have no dealings with Baron Matenesse," replied Van Bronkhorst. "So far as

you yourself are concerned, you can go home or remain here—that is as you please.”

“Go to see your cousin, Jonker,” said Dousa, kindly. “It will be an hour yet before I have found paper and pens and wax to seal my letter; and Mistress van Hoogstraten will be glad to hear of her father from you.”

“Yes; if you like to go, my house is open to you, young gentleman,” added the Burgomaster.

Nicolas hesitated for an instant, and then said hastily.

“Yes; take me to her.”

Baron van Warmond undertook to escort him, and when they had reached the street known as the Nordeinde, Nicolas asked him:

“You are the Jonker van Duivenvoorde, Seigneur of Warmond?”

“I am.”

“And you were with the Gueux when they took Brill from the Spaniards?”

“I had that good fortune.”

“And yet yours is a fine old title; and there were other nobles, too, among the Gueux?”

“To be sure; and do you suppose it is any discredit to us to have a heart that beats true for the home of our fathers? My ancestors, like yours, were noble before a Spaniard ever trod our soil.”

“But King Philip rules us as our legitimate sovereign.”

“Alas! and it is for that very reason we submit to his regent, the Prince, who governs in his name. The perjured ruffian needs a protector. Ask any questions you please; I am ready to answer.”

Nicolas, however, did not respond to this challenge, and walked by his escort in silence till they reached the Achtergracht. There he stopped short, eagerly seized the

soldier's arm, and said in broken sentences and in a low voice,

"My heart is bursting—I must speak to some one! I want to be a Hollander; I hate the Spaniards. I learned to know them at Leyderdorp and at the Hague. They paid no heed to me, as I was only a lad; and they did not know I understood their language. So my eyes were opened! Whenever they speak of us it is with scorn and contempt. I know everything that Alva and Vargas did here; and I heard from the very lips of the Spaniards themselves that they long to annihilate and exterminate us. If I only could do as I wish—and if it were not for my father I know what I would do! But my brain is in a whirl, and the Burgomaster's speech put me almost beside myself. Tell him, Jonker, I beg you tell him, that I hate the Spaniards, and that it is my pride to be a Dutchman."

They had meanwhile gone on their way again, and as they got nearer and nearer to the Burgomaster's house, the young officer, who had listened with pleased surprise to the lad's profession, said to him:

"You are carved out of sound timber, Jonker, and are walking in the right way. Only bear Master Peter's words in mind, and reflect on what history teaches you. Whose names are those that are written on the most splendid pages of the great book of the fate of nations—the tyrants and those who have obeyed them slavishly with eye-service, or the men who have lived and died for freedom? Hold up your head! This struggle will probably last longer than either of us, and you have ample time before you for fighting on the right side. A noble should serve his liege, but he ought never to become the slave of a monarch—least of all of a stranger, and the enemy of his nation. Here we are! In an hour I will come and escort you back; give me your

hand, and for the future I should like to call you by your Christian name, my brave Nico ! ”

“ Do so ! ” cried the lad ; “ and you will not send any one else to escort me, will you ? I want to talk further with you.”

The Jonker was received at the house of the Van der Werffs by Barbara. Henrika could not see him at that instant, for Father Damianus was with her, so he had to wait in the dining-room till the priest came down. Nicolas knew him very well, and, in former years, had confessed to him from time to time. After he had greeted the worthy man, and answered his inquiry as to why he was there, he went on at once, and hurriedly :

“ Father, forgive me,—but there is something on my mind ! You are a saintly man, and you must know. Is it a sin for a Hollander to rebel against the Spaniards—is it wrong when a Dutchman resolves to be and to remain what God himself has made him ? I cannot believe it.”

“ Neither can I believe it,” replied Damianus, in his simple fashion. “ He who clings to our Holy Church—he who loves his neighbour, and tries to do right, may in all confidence be a true-hearted Dutchman, and pray and fight for his country’s freedom.”

“ Oh ! ” gasped Nicolas, with a flashing glance.

“ For, after all,” Damianus went on more eagerly, “ we were good Catholics here, and lived piously and in the fear of God before a Spaniard ever came into the land. And why should it not be so again ? The Almighty divided the nations because He thought good that each should live its own life, and grow in knowledge to its own salvation and to His glory, and not that the stronger should have the right to torture and oppress the weaker. Now, just suppose

that my lord your father should go out walking, and a Spanish grandee should leap upon his shoulders and flog him and spur him as though he were his riding-horse. It would be an evil day for the Spaniard! Then in the place of Baron Matenesse say Holland, and in that of the grandee say powerful Spain, and you will see what I think of the matter. Nothing is left to us but to throw off the oppressor. The Holy Church will not suffer by that; God has established it, and it will stand firm whether King Philip rules here or another. Now you know my views; am I right or am I wrong in thinking you are tired of the name of Glipper, my brave Jonker?"

"You are right, Father Damianus, a thousand times right. It is not a sin to hope to see Holland free."

"And who told you that it was?"

"Canon Bermont and our chaplain."

"Then on this, which is but a temporal question, our opinions differ. Render unto God the things that are God's, and hold your own in the place in which God has set you. When your beard is grown, if you feel bound to fight for the liberties of Holland, do so in all confidence. For such a sin I, for one, will readily grant you absolution."

Henrika was rejoiced to see the bright and happy-looking lad once more. Nicolas had to tell her all his news of her father and his, and why he had come to Leyden. When she heard that he was about to return within an hour, a good idea struck her with reference to Belotti's errand, which she was just then chiefly concerned with. She told Nicholas of the project she had in view, and begged him to conduct the steward through the Spanish lines and as far as the Hague; and Wibisma was not merely willing to do it, but promised her that when the old man returned, he would find means to let her know.

At the end of an hour the boy bade her farewell, and as he was once more crossing the Achtergracht with Van Warmond, he gaily asked him :

“And how can I get to join the Gueux?”

“You !” said the Baron astonished.

“Yes I,” said the lad eagerly. “I shall soon be eighteen years old, and then—wait, only wait—you shall hear of me again.”

“Well said, Nicolas, and well done !” said his companion. “Let us be Dutch nobles and noble Dutchmen for ever !”

Three hours later the young Baron Matenesse van Wibisma rode into the Hague, followed by Belotti, who had known him and loved him from a child. He brought nothing for his father but a neatly-folded and carefully-sealed letter which Janus Dousa had given him, charging him with a meaning smile to deliver it from the municipality of Leyden to the “Maestre del Campo Valdez,” and which contained nothing but a line from Dionysius Cato, elaborately written in an elegant hand on a large sheet of paper :

“Fistula dulce canit volucrem dum decipit anceps.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE first week of June had passed, and half the second; the beautiful sunny days were now over, and many customers crowded into the *Angulus* of the Exchange Inn as evening fell; it was snug in there though the sea-wind might howl and the rain fall in torrents, splashing on the pavement outside. The Spanish besiegers encircled the town like a wall of iron. Each man felt himself a fellow-prisoner with the rest, and clung more closely to those whose situation and sentiments were the same as his own. Business and traffic were at a standstill; inactivity and anxiety weighed like lead on the spirits of the inhabitants, and those who wanted to hurry on the weary and lagging hours to a swifter flight, or refresh their oppressed souls, resorted to the taverns, where they could give expression to their own hopes and fears, and hear what others felt and thought of their common sufferings.

Every table in the *Angulus* was occupied, and any one who wanted to be heard by a neighbour sitting even at a short distance had to raise his voice considerably, for a separate discussion was being carried on at each table; while here, there, and everywhere, the bustling serving-wench was shouted for; glasses were clinking, and the metal lids clanked on the tops of the stout earthenware jugs.

But loudest of all was a discussion that was being carried on at a round table at the farther end of the long narrow room. Six officers were seated at it, and among them Georg von Dornburg. Captain van der Laen, his superior officer, whose career had been really that of a hero, was entertaining the company by relating in a loud, deep voice many extraordinary and amusing stories of his adventures by land and sea, Colonel Mulder constantly interrupting him and capping each hardly credible anecdote with a similar but absolutely impossible story, and grinning as he did so. Van Duivenvoorde interfered as peacemaker when the Captain—who was conscious of adhering pretty closely to facts—indignantly repelled the older officer's jesting insinuations. Lieutenant Cromwell, a grave man with a broad round head and straight lank hair, who had come to Holland to fight for the Reformed Faith, took little part in the talk, speaking only a few words of very broken Dutch. Georg leaned back in his chair with his legs stretched out, and sat silent, staring into the air.

Master Aquanus, the host, went from one table to another, and when presently he came to that at which the officers were sitting, he stood still in front of the young Thuringian and said :

"Well, Jonker, and whither are your thoughts flown? You are not yourself at all these last few days. What possesses you?"

Georg started upright, stretched himself like a man waking from sleep, and answered good humouredly :

"In idleness one soon falls into dreamy ways."

"His cage is too small for him," interrupted van Laen. "If this goes on much longer we shall all have the staggers, like sheep."

"Or get as stiff as that brass idol on the mantel-shelf," added the Colonel.

"We heard the same complaints in the first siege," said the host, "but the Seigneur of Noyelles drank down his discontent, and emptied many a cask of my best liquor."

"Tell these gentlemen how he paid you," cried Mulder.

"There hangs the note, framed and glazed," laughed Aquanus. Instead of sending me money he wrote those lines :

'My worthy friend, I owe you many a kindly turn,
But if from me you hope for hard coin in return,
'Tis vain—so ere I leave this town that I have stayed in,
Instead of filthy wage
Take this fair written page—
Paper is legal tender now in Leyden.'"

"Capital!" cried the Jonker van Warmond. "And it was you who cut the die for the paper coinage!"

"To be sure! The Seigneur de Noyelles' inaction cost me a good deal. Now you have twice tried to make a move."

"Silence, silence! for Heaven's sake say nothing of our first sortie," cried the Captain. "It was a well-planned attempt, which failed disgracefully because its leader must lay himself down to sleep like a mole! Was there ever such a case heard of before?"

"But the second came to a better issue," said Aquanus. "Three hundred hams, a hundred tuns of beer, butter, and ammunition, and the basest of spies into the bargain—a booty worth taking at any rate."

"And yet that was a failure too!" cried Van der Laen. "Why, we might have cut away and towed in all the provision ships on the Leyden Lake! and the Kaak! to

think of that island fort being in the hands of the enemy !”

“But our men fought bravely,” said the Captain.

“Ay, there are some of the devil’s own among them,” said Van der Laen laughing. “One of them ran a Spaniard through, and in the midst of the fighting stopped to draw off his red hose, and pull them on his own legs.”

“I know the man,” said the host ; “his name is Van Keulen ; there he is, sitting down near the beer-tap, and telling all sorts of queer random stories to the other folks. He is a perfect dare-devil and with a face like a Satyr. But we have our joys too ! Think of the defeat of Chevraux and the Gueux’ victory at Vlissingen on the Scheldt.”

“To our brave Admiral Boisot and the valiant army of the Gueux !” cried Van der Laen, clinking his glass against the Colonel’s. Mulder in his turn raised his glass to the young Baron, who, however, was once more lost in reverie, and took no notice of the action.

“Well, Jonker von Dornburg,” exclaimed the Colonel irritably, “it takes you a long time to respond to a pledge.” Georg started.

“A pledge !” he said hastily ; “to be sure. I drink to you, Colonel.” And as he spoke he took up his goblet, emptied it at a draught, rang it with his nail, and set it down again on the table.

“Well done !” cried the old officer, and Aquanus remarked :

“He learned that at college ; study makes a man thirsty ;” and he cast a kindly and anxious glance at the young German. Then he looked towards the door, which opened to admit the musician. The host went forward to meet him.

"I do not like the looks of the German Jonker," he whispered to the newcomer. "Our singing lark has become a moping owl. What is the matter with him?"

"He is home-sick; he gets no news from his people; and then he thinks of this trap into which war has flung him in his pursuit of fame and glory. He will soon be himself again."

"I hope so," replied Van Aken; "so green a sapling must surely soon spring straight again, when it has been bent to the ground; you must help him up; he is a splendid young fellow."

At this moment a customer called the host, and the musician sat down with the officers and began a conversation with Georg in a low tone that was completely drowned in the loud confusion of other voices and sounds.

Wilhelm had just come from the Van der Werffs', where he had learned that the next day but one, the 14th of June, was the Burgomaster's birthday. Adrian had told Henrika, who had repeated it to him. The worthy man was to be surprised in the early morning with some music and singing.

"Capital!" Georg interrupted his friend; "she will do the thing to perfection."

"Not she alone; the Burgomaster's wife will help too. At first she steadily refused, but when I proposed a pretty madrigal, she gave in, and is to take the first treble."

"The first treble?" said the Jonker eagerly. "I am at your service too, of course; let us go—have you the copy at your house?"

"No, Jonker, I have just left it with the ladies,—but early to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning you practise! That tankard is for me, pretty Dortchen! To your good health, Colonel

Mulder! Captain Duivenvoorde, here is to your new company of horse, and may I ride many a jolly mile by your side!"

The German's eyes had regained their bright and lively sparkle, and as Van der Laen went on with what he had been saying:

"The Sea Gueux will utterly destroy the Spanish fleet," he shouted vehemently. "To the sea, gentlemen, to the sea. Cast your cause upon the waters! that is the best way. Shout down the storm, grapple, and board; fight man to man and hand to hand on the enemy's deck! Strike and conquer or go to the bottom with the foe!"

"Here is to your good luck, Jonker!" cried the Colonel, "storm and thunder! but we can find a place for a man like you."

"Now you are yourself again," said Wilhelm, turning to his friend. "Here is to the health of those you love at home."

"Two glasses for once," exclaimed Georg. "To those I love at home, to all love's joys and sorrows, to the women we love, each and all! War is a pastime, and love is life! Let our wounds bleed, and our hearts break into a thousand pieces. Laurels grow on the battlefield, and love weaves wreaths of roses—roses with thorns to be sure, but still lovely roses! Away with you—no one shall drink out of you again!" And with a heightened colour, he flung the glass into a corner of the room, where it was dashed into fragments. His companions shouted in chorus, but Lieutenant Cromwell rose and quietly quitted the room, while Aquanus even shook his shrewd head doubtfully.

It seemed as if fire had been poured into the young man's spirit, and his soul had taken wings. His long curls were tossed in disorder round his handsome head, as he

leaned back in his chair, with his gorget unlaced, and flung keen jests and gay fancies into the midst of his comrades' sober talk. Wilhelm heard him, now with astonishment, and then again with anxiety. Day had long since dawned, when the musician and his friend left the tavern ; Colonel Mulder looked after him, and exclaimed to the others who still remained :

"That madcap wag has the very devil in him."

The madrigal in three parts was practised that morning at the Burgomaster's house, while Van der Werff himself was sitting as President of the Council. Georg stood between Maria and Henrika. So long as their conductor had to correct their mistakes, and suggest repetitions, the little chorus were in the best of spirits, and more than once, Barbara, in the next room, heard them laughing merrily ; but when all had mastered their parts, and the madrigal was to be performed without a mistake, the two women grew graver. Maria never took her eyes off the page, and her voice had rarely sounded so emotional and so sweetly pure. Georg accommodated his singing to hers, and whenever he looked up from the notes, his eyes were fixed on her face. Henrika tried to meet his glance, but always in vain ; she wanted to divert his attention from the young wife, and at the same time it nettled her that she should remain unnoticed. She longed and strove to outdo Maria, and all the passionate vehemence of her nature rang in her voice. Her fire and spirit carried away the others ; Maria's treble sounded brightly and joyously above the full tones of the German, while Henrika's deep notes flowed on, strong and jubilant. The musician, delighted and flattered, beat time, and as he listened to the rich sweetness of Henrika's voice, cradled his fancy in tender memories of her sister.

When the serenade was finished, he cried out : " Once more ! " The contest between the two young women began again, and this time the Jonker's eye met Maria's ; she hastily laid down her music, and stepping out of the little group, she said :

" We know the madrigal. To-morrow morning early, Master Wilhelm ; my time is precious."

" What a pity ! " said the organist ; " it was going so splendidly, and there were only a few bars more to the end." But Maria was already leaving the room, and only replied : " Till to-morrow morning."

The musician thanked Henrika in warm terms for her splendid singing, and Georg politely did the same. When they were gone, Henrika began to pace the room with a hasty step, striking one little fist with passionate defiance against her other hand.

On the morning of the Master's birthday, the singers were up betimes ; but Peter himself had risen with the sun, for he had to look through certain proposals and measures which had to be made ready before the sitting of the Council.

Nothing was farther from his mind than the recollection of his birthday, and when the little chorus struck up in the dining-room, he thumped at the door with his hand, and called out :

" We are very busy here ; you must find some other place for your sing-song." The performance of the madrigal ceased, and Barbara observed :

" A man who is picking apples does not trouble himself about a fishing-net. It does not strike him that it is his birthday. Let the children go in to him first."

Maria led Adrian and Liesje into her husband's study. Each held a nosegay, and Maria had dressed the

little girl so prettily, that in her white frock she really looked like a sweet Elfing. Now, at last, Peter understood what the singing had meant. He embraced the trio who had come to congratulate him, and when the madrigal was started once more, he placed himself opposite to listen. The performance, to be sure, was not half so good as the rehearsal had been, for Maria sang too softly, and not so clearly as before, and in spite of Wilhelm's energetic time-beating, they could not recover the fire and swing that had carried it through the day before.

"Capital, excellent!" said Peter, when the voices ceased; "well conceived and well executed—a delightful birthday surprise." He then shook each performer by the hand, with a few kind words, and as he took the Jonker's, he said: "You have dropped upon us from heaven in these cruel times. A home even among strangers is better than none, and that you have here, and welcome."

Georg was looking at the floor, but at the Burgomaster's last words he raised his eyes to the speaker's. How honestly, how kindly, and frankly they gazed into his own! He was overcome by a strange emotion, and without reflecting, without knowing what he did, he laid his hand on Peter's arm, and hid his face on his shoulder.

Van der Werff passed his hand over the young man's waving hair, and said with a kind smile:

"Like Leonhard, wife; just what our Leonhard was! We will all meet again at dinner to-day; you too, Van Hout, not forgetting your good wife."

At dinner time Maria distributed the party so that she need not look at Georg; he was placed next to Dame van Hout and opposite to Henrika and the musician. At first he was silent and embarrassed, but Henrika gave him no peace, and when once he had been led into answering her

questions he was soon carried away by her vehement vivacity, and gave full play to his merry wit. Nor was she behindhand in the sport; her eyes flashed, and in her growing eagerness to measure her wit with his, she strove to cap every jest and every repartee. She drank no wine, but her own flow of words seemed to intoxicate her, and she so entirely absorbed the Baron's attention that he had no time to address a word to any one else. Indeed, when he once did so, she abruptly interrupted him and compelled him to turn to her again. This insistance annoyed him; and while it vexed him it excited his defiant spirit, and he provoked Henrika to the wildest assertions, which he met by others not less extravagant.

Maria meanwhile listened to the young girl in blank astonishment, and there was something that displeased her in the Baron's demeanour to the young lady. Peter paid little heed to her, for he was talking with Van Hout of certain letters received from "Glippers," counselling the town to surrender, of which three had already reached them; and they were also discussing the wavering opinions of some of the members of the Council and the execution of a spy who had been taken.

Wilhelm, whose neighbour had hardly vouchsafed him a word, was now listening to the conversation of the older men, and remarked that he himself had known the traitor; he was the keeper of a tavern where he once had met the Baron Matenesse van Wibisma.

"Now the secret is out!" exclaimed the Town-clerk. "In Quatgelat's pocket I found a scrap of paper, and the writing on it was damnably like the Baron's. Quatgelat was to get information as to the amount of provisions left in Leyden."

"They are a pair!" cried the Burgomaster. "But,



alas! he might have carried only too gratifying a report to Valdez. Our own inquiries have not proved comforting; to be sure, the returns are not yet precise and complete."

"That we might leave to the women to do within the next few days."

"To women?" cried Peter aghast.

"Yes, to us," said the Town-clerk's wife. "Why should we sit idle when we might prove ourselves of use?"

"Allow us to do something," exclaimed Maria. "We long as earnestly as you to do something in the service of the great cause."

"And believe me," added Dame van Hout, "we shall be more readily admitted to inspect the contents of lofts and cellars than ushers and men-at-arms, of whom the citizens' wives would be afraid."

"Women in the service of the town!" said Peter doubtfully. "To be frank with you—but the proposal shall be duly considered—Mistress Henrika is in high spirits to-day."

Maria glanced with some displeasure at Henrika, who was leaning far across the table. She was showing the Jonker a ring, and said, laughing:

"Do you not know what the emblem means? A serpent with its fangs set in its own tail."

"Yes," said Georg, "it is the symbol of self-torment."

"Good, good! But it has another meaning, and you should mark it well, Sir Knight. Do you know what is meant by eternity and eternal constancy?"

"No, Mistress. In Jena we are not taught to think of such deep matters."

"Of course not. Your teachers are men. Men and constancy!—eternal fidelity!"

"And was Delilah, who betrayed Samson to the Philistines, a man or a woman?" asked Van Hout.

"She was a woman—the exception that proves the rule. Is it not so, Maria?" But the Burgomaster's wife did not answer; she only nodded in silence, then she pushed her chair impatiently from the table, and the meal was at an end.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DAYS and weeks had slipped away; a hot August had followed July, and now August was near its close. The Spaniards still invested Leyden, and the town was now a prison indeed. The soldiers and armed citizens did their duty dully and wearily; at the town-hall there was plenty to be done, no doubt, but the labours of the authorities were all sad and painful, for no message reached them from the Prince or the States-General to encourage their hopes, and all they found to discuss and decide referred to the threatened famine and that hideous attendant of war, the pestilence, which had invaded Leyden hand in hand with starvation. Added to this, the number of the malcontents increased from week to week. The adherents of the old order of things uplifted their voices louder and louder, and many a friend of freedom, seeing those dear to him sicken and perish, joined the Spanish party and clamoured for the surrender of the city. The children still went to school as they had always done, and still met in their playgrounds, but the merry audacity of former days only now and then flickered into life; and what had become of the boys' rosy cheeks and the girls' fair round arms? The poor tightened their belts, and the scrap of bread which was doled out to each by the town authorities no

longer sufficed to satisfy hunger or keep body and soul together.

Jonker Georg had now long been an inmate of the Van der Werffs' house. On the morning of the twenty-ninth of August he was returning home from a walk; he carried a cross-bow in his hand and a game-bag slung across his shoulder; he did not as usual go upstairs, but went into the kitchen to Dame Barbara. The widow welcomed him with a friendly nod; her gray eyes twinkled as brightly as ever, but her jolly round face was narrower, and a melancholy line had set itself at the corners of her pinched lips.

"Well, what have you brought us to-day?" she asked the young man. Georg laughed as he emptied his bag.

"A fat woodcock, and besides that four larks; you know."

"Poor little sparrows. But what sort of creature is this—no head, no feet, and carefully plucked! Jonker, Jonker, this is very suspicious."

"It will all go into the pot, never mind what it is called!"

"But yet—who knows what it may have fattened on; and the Lord did not create every creature fit for man's food."

"I told you just now; it is a short-billed woodcock, a genuine *corvus*."

"*Corvus*? Oh! that is all right. I was afraid of the thing—these feathers here under the wing—merciful God! Is it not a raven?"

"It is a *corvus*, as I have told you. Lay the bird in vinegar and stew it with a little spice, and it will taste for all the world like an ordinary woodcock. Wild duck are not to be got every day as they were lately, and the small birds are as scarce as roses at Christmas. Every boy is on the watch with his bow and arrows, and in every courtyard

they are being caught with sieves and limed twigs. They are fast being exterminated, but here and there one has escaped. How is the Elfing?"

"Do not call her so," cried the widow. "Do, I entreat you, give her her Christian name. She is as white as this cloth, and since yesterday she has refused to take the milk we have got her every day at an immense cost. God knows what will come of it. Look at that cabbage-stalk: that was half a stuiver! And those wretched bones—I should have thought them too bad to throw to a dog once, and now the whole house must make shift to dine off them. For supper I can stew some shreds of ham with wine, and make some porridge. And that for a giant like Peter! where he gets his strength from, God alone knows. But indeed he looks but the shadow of himself. Maria needs no more than a bird; but Adrian, poor boy, often leaves the table with tears in his eyes, and yet he often breaks a piece of bread off his thin slice for Liesje, that I know. It is pitiable to see. And yet we can only say: Cut your coat according to your cloth—necessity knows no law, and save if you would have. The day before yesterday we again sent in an account of what we have left, as others did, and to-morrow we must give in to the common stock everything that is over and above what we require for a fortnight; and Peter will not let us keep back even a bag of meal; and after that what will happen, what will become of us?—merciful Heaven!"

The widow burst out sobbing as she spoke, and went on in a voice choked by tears. "How do you keep up your strength? This miserable scrap of meat at your age is like a drop of water on a hot stone."

"Master van Aken gives me what he can spare out of his rations in addition to my own. I shall do very well—

but what I saw to-day down at the tailor's who is mending some clothes for me !——"

"Yes?"

"Two of his children have died of hunger."

"And at the weaver's," added Barbara, crying. "Such decent folks as they are, too. The young wife lay in only four days ago, and this morning mother and child are both dead of weakness—gone out like a candle that has burned down to the end. At Peterssohn's, the cloth-maker, the father and all five children are dead of the pestilence. If that is not pitiable——"

"There—tell me no more," said Georg, with a shudder. "I must go now to exercise the men in the courtyard."

"And that! what good does that do? The Spaniards do not attack us; they leave that to the skeleton fiends. Your drill makes you hungry, and the miserable starvelings you have enlisted can hardly move their own limbs."

"You are wrong, mother, quite wrong," replied the young man. "Activity and exercise keep them going. When the Jonker van Nordwyk asked me to drill them in the place of poor Captain Allertssohn he knew what he was about."

"You are thinking of the saying that a ploughshare never rusts. Perhaps you are right; but before you go drink a mouthful of liquor. We are still well off for wine. Well, at any rate when folks are kept employed they do not mutiny like those miserable volunteers the day before yesterday. Thank God we are quit of them!" While the widow was filling a glass, the musician's worthy mother, Dame van Mierop, came into the kitchen and greeted Barbara and the Baron. She carried a little parcel wrapped in cloth, which she clasped tightly to her bosom. Her person was still tolerably substantial, but her ample dimen-

sions, which only a few months ago she had carried with honest pride, now seemed a burden which oppressed her. She took her parcel in her right hand, and holding it out, she said :

"I have something here for your Liesje. My Wilhelm, like a good soul as he is——" but here she paused and withdrew her gift ; she had observed the Jonker's plucked bird, and she went on in an altered tone : "But I see you have a pigeon already—so much the better. The Town-clerk's little girl is beginning to sicken too. Till to-morrow—God willing."

She turned to go, but the Jonker held her back, and said :

"You are mistaken, most worthy Dame. I shot that bird to-day ; and I will confess now, mother—my corvus is a miserable raven."

"I thought as much !" cried the widow. "Abominable carrion !" But she poked her finger against the bird's breast, and added reflectively : "Still there is some flesh on the breast."

"A raven !" cried the Receiver-general's wife, clasping her hands in horror. "But, to be sure, the cats and dogs have long since twirled on many a spit and found their way into many a stewpan. There is the pigeon for you."

Barbara unwrapped the precious morsel as tenderly as if it might break under her hand, and gazed at it quite lovingly, as she felt its weight, and the worthy donor went on :

"This is the fourth already that my son has killed, and he says it was a good flier too. He himself sent it expressly for Liesje. Stuff it nicely with a light paste—not too stiff and a very little sweetened. That is what the little ones like ; and it is sure to do her good, for it was given

with real good will. But put it out of sight, for when one has known the poor little thing so well it grieves one to see it dead."

"May God reward you!" cried Barbara, wringing the good woman's hand. "Oh, these are awful times!"

"But still there is always something to be thankful for."

"Certainly, for it is still worse in hell," retorted the widow.

"Nay—do not speak so sinfully," said the old woman, gravely, "for you have but one sick child in your house. Is Dame Maria within?"

"She is in the workrooms giving the people a little meat out of what we can spare. Are you as badly off for meal as we are? There are still cows to be seen in the fields, but the corn has vanished as if it had been swept away; there was not a measure for sale in the market. Will you take a glass of wine, friend Van Mierop? And shall I fetch my sister-in-law?"

"I will go and find her myself. The prices in the market are quite beyond endurance. We cannot stand them at all; but she will bring the folks to reason."

"The dealers in the market?" asked Georg.

"Yes, Baron von Dornburg, yes. That gentle woman can do things you would never believe of her. The day before yesterday, when the authorities wanted to find out what store of provisions still remained in each house, I and the others found the people very ill pleased, and several, in fact, showed us the door. And she went to the roughest and rudest, and they opened their cellars and storerooms to her, as the waves of the sea parted before the children of Israel. How she managed it God only knows, but no one could resist her."

Georg drew a deep breath and left the kitchen. In

the courtyard he found some of the town-guard, with a few volunteers and soldiers belonging to the town-watch, with whom he was about to practise fencing. Van der Werff had lent his courtyard for the purpose, and certainly there was not in all Leyden a man better fitted to take the place of the valorous Allertssohn than the young German Baron.

But Barbara was right; his pupils looked lean and wretched enough; still, many a man among them had learned to wield his sword right well from their deceased master, and put his whole soul into his work. In the middle of the courtyard stood a dummy stuffed with tow and covered with leather, which had on its left side a red patch in the form of a heart. On this the unskilled were made to practise, to steady their hand and eye; the rest stood in pairs, face to face, and fought their bloodless duels under the Baron's directions with blunted rapiers.

The young man had been feeling very limp and feeble when he first came into the kitchen, for he had left the larger half of his day's rations at the unfortunate tailor's; but Barbara's wine had done him good, and he pulled himself together and went out boldly and resolutely to meet his pupils. He flung his ruff on to a bench, tightened up his belt, and was soon standing in his shirt-sleeves in front of the soldiers.

No sooner had he spoken his first word of command than Henrika's bow window was shut with an angry rattle. It had often been thrown open on former occasions when the fencing practice had begun; indeed, she had not been too coy to clap her hands now and then or shout, "Well done!" But this was long since; for some weeks past she had not had a word or a glance for the Baron. She had never before treated any man as she had him, nor taken so much trouble to win even a prince's good graces. And

he ? At first he had taken it very coolly, and afterwards he had taken more and more pains to avoid her. Her pride was deeply wounded ; her mission to keep him out of Maria's way was long since forgotten ; and, indeed, something—she knew not what—had risen up and stood between her and the young wife. Not a day passed without her having occasion to meet the Jonker ; and of this she was glad, for it gave her the opportunity of showing him that she was indifferent to him—nay, that she would rather not see him. Her imprisonment within the walls weighed heavily on her, and she longed beyond all utterance to be free—in the open country—in the woods. Nevertheless she never expressed a wish to leave the town, for Georg was in Leyden, and he filled her mind sleeping and waking. To-day she loved him, to-morrow she hated him, and both with all the vehemence of her passionate nature. She often thought of her sister, and put up many a prayer for her. To win the favour of Heaven by good works, as well as to dissipate the tedium of life, she helped the Carmelite Sisters, who lived in the little old convent close to the Van der Werffs' house, to nurse the sick whom they had benevolently taken under their roof, and even went with Sister Gonzaga to the houses of the richer Catholics to collect their alms for the little hospital. But she did all this without any cheerful devotedness ; sometimes with fevered zeal and then again indifferently ; sometimes she would even neglect it for days. She had become to the last degree irritable ; but after carrying everything with such a high hand as to be quite unendurable one day, the next day she would be depressed and melancholy, though she never thought of asking forgiveness of those whom she had offended.

At the present moment she stood behind her window looking at Georg, who was rushing at the leather man with

flying leaps, and piercing his red heart through and through with his sword. The soldiers gave loud expression to their admiration; even Henrika's eyes glanced approval, but they suddenly lost their fire, and she turned on her heel as she saw Maria come out of the warehouses and with down-cast eyes cross the courtyard in front of the fencers.

The young woman was paler than of yore, but her clear blue eye looked out on the world with more independence and determination. She had learned to go her own way, and had sought and found many onerous duties in the service of the town and of the poor. In many a wild heart-struggle she had won the field, but the battle was not yet over; that she felt keenly as often as Georg's way and hers happened to cross. She avoided him whenever it was possible, for she did not conceal from herself that any attempt to live with him on equal terms as a friend and a brother could be nothing else but the first step towards the abyss. He honestly did his best to second her efforts, with infinite self-control; and of this she was gratefully conscious, for she stood heart to heart with her husband on the ship of their united life; she would have no other pilot but Peter, nor was there any terror in the thought of foundering with him. And yet, and yet—Georg was the mountain of lodestone which attracted her to its side, and which she must diligently avoid to save the whole craft from shipwreck.

To-day she had made it her business in the workshops to ask each worker how he was getting on, and pictures of the utmost misery had been brought before her. The brave folks knew that the surrender of the town might put an end to their sufferings, but for faith and freedom's sake they were resigned to hold out, and bore their hardships as an inevitable misfortune.

In the hall Maria met Wilhelm's mother, and she promised her that in the course of the day she would speak to the Town-clerk's wife on the subject of the exorbitant demands of the market-folk ; then she went to poor little Liesje's room, and found the child sitting pale and exhausted in her little chair. Her best doll had been lying in her lap in the same position for more than an hour, for her hands and spirit were too feeble to play with the toy. Truitje brought her in a cupful of fresh milk ; the supply had not yet altogether failed, for a considerable number of cows still grazed outside the walls within range of the cannon ; but the child would not drink it, and cried before she could at last be persuaded to sip a few drops.

While Maria was coaxing the little girl, Peter came into the room. The fine tall man, the very ideal of a respectable burgher, who was wont to pay some attention too to the dignity of his outward appearance, now looked neglected ; his brown hair hung over his forehead, his thick beard—usually so cleanly defined—now spread a thin unshaven border of lighter colour over his cheeks ; his doublet was too wide for him, and his hose did not cling neatly as they used, but hung in creases on his sturdy legs.

He waved his hand languidly to his wife, and going up to the child, he stood looking at her for some time in silence, but with pathetic tenderness. The child turned her sweet little face towards him and tried to smile at him, but the smile faded on her lips, and she looked down again dully at the doll. He bent down and lifted her up in his arms, called her name, and kissed her pale cheeks. The child gently stroked his beard, and said feebly :

“Put me down again, father ; it makes me giddy to be held so high up.”

His eyes were moist as he gently set her down in her

little chair again. Then he quitted the room, and went to his own study. Maria followed him.

"Nothing yet from the Prince or the States-General?" she asked.

He shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing.

"But they will not, they cannot forget us," cried his wife eagerly.

"We are dying, and they leave us to die," he said, gloomily.

"No, no, they have pierced the dykes. I know, I am sure, they will relieve us."

"Yes, when it is too late. One misfortune comes upon another, miseries are heaped upon us, and on whom do the curses of the starving folks fall? On me, on me, and on no one but me."

"Nay, you have the Prince's representative to stand by you."

Peter smiled bitterly.

"He took to his bed yesterday," he said. "The plague, Bontius says. I am alone to bear it all."

"We bear it with you," said Maria. "In dearth now, and then in hunger, as we pledged ourselves."

"And worse than that! Our last flour was baked to-day. There is no more bread anywhere."

"We still have cattle and horses."

"It will be their turn next; it was settled to-day; two pounds with bone to every four souls. Bread gone, cows gone, milk gone. And then what will happen? Mothers, infants, sick folks—— and our Liesje——"

The Burgomaster pressed his hands to his temples and groaned; but Maria said: "Courage, Peter; courage. Cling only to one thing, one thing never cease to hold fast by——hope."

"Hope!" he said scornfully; "hope!"

"To cease to hope," she went on, "means despair. Despair in our case means opening the gates, and opening the gates means——"

"Who thinks of opening the gates? Who speaks of surrender?" he interrupted wrathfully. "We still stand firm—still, still—— There is the letter-case; give it to the messenger."

CHAPTER XXIX.

LIESJE had eaten a scrap of the roast pigeon, the first solid food for several days, and there was as much joy in the Burgomaster's house as though some great piece of good fortune had befallen the family. Adrian ran across to the workshops, and told all the work-people. Peter drew himself up more bravely as he went to the town-hall, and Maria, being obliged to go out, went round to the good dame who had brought the bird, to tell her what a good effect her son's gift had had.

Tears ran down the good woman's flabby cheeks as she listened to Dame Maria's report. She kissed her, exclaiming :

"Ah, our Wilhelm—my Wilhelm! I wish he were at home at this moment ; but I will call his father. But, to be sure, he is out too, at the town-hall. What was I thinking of? Hark, Dame, listen! what is that?"

The old lady's speech had been interrupted by the pealing of bells and booming of cannon ; she hastily threw open the window, exclaiming :

"It is the bell of St. Pancras, and not an alarm bell! Hark, firing and joyful chimes! Something good must have happened—well, we wanted it! Ullrich, Ullrich! Come back at once and tell us the news. Great and

merciful Father, merciful God ! send us relief ! If it should be there already !”

The women waited in the utmost excitement ; at last Ullrich, Wilhelm's brother, came back, and told them that the messengers sent from Delft had succeeded in making their way through the enemy's ranks, and had brought a letter from the States-General. Van Hout had read it to the people from a window of the town-hall. The States-General praised the conduct and steadfastness of the town, and informed them that, notwithstanding the injury it must entail on thousands of landholders, the dykes were being pierced.

The sea was in fact already flooding the country, and the messengers had themselves seen the vessels which were to bring relief. Before long the land round Leyden would be under water, and the rising flood must compel the Spanish army to evacuate their position. “Better a drowned land than a lost land !” This stern motto had decided the votes as to resorting to this extreme measure, and it might be confidently expected that those who had staked so much already would shrink from no sacrifice to save Leyden. The two women shook hands with happy excitement ; the peal of bells rang cheerily out, and shot after shot shook the rattling windows.

It was growing dark as Maria made her way homewards. It was long since she had felt so light-hearted. The black tablets on the plague-stricken houses looked less dismal ; the sharpened faces less pitiable than before, for succour was at hand for all. Their tenacious fidelity would be rewarded ; the cause of freedom would triumph.

Her feet seemed winged as she walked down the Breede Straat. Thousands of townsfolk were assembled there to see and to hear what they might dare to hope, or what

there was still to fear. The town musicians—an important institution in every Dutch or German town in those times—were posted at the corners of the streets, and playing with inspiring energy, while the chant of the Gueux mingled with the sound of pipes and trumpets, and the shouts of the excited inhabitants. But there were, too, several groups of well-dressed citizens and their wives, who had collected on purpose to mock loudly and unblushingly at the cheerful strains and the deluded simpletons who allowed themselves to be cheated by empty promises. Where was the relief? What could such a handful of Gueux as, at best, the Prince could command and bring up, do against the tremendous force the King had set down to beleaguer Leyden? And as to flooding the country—the plain on which the town stood was too high for the water ever to reach it. The peasants had been ruined without helping the townsfolk. There was but one way of escape: To trust to the King's clemency.

"What good will freedom do us?" cried a brewer, whose grain had long since been confiscated with that of all his guild, and who had been unable to brew any new beer. "What good will freedom do us when we are all cold in our graves? Every well-meaning man follow me to the town-hall, and insist on surrender before it is too late."

"Surrender! trust to the King's grace!" a score or so of citizens shouted in chorus.

"Ay, first we must live, and then comes the question of free or Spanish—Calvinist or Papist!" shouted a master weaver. "I am going to the town-hall."

"You are very right, good folks," said Burgomaster Baersdorp, who was coming towards them from the town-hall, in a splendid cloak bordered with sable, and who had heard the last speech; "but be warned! to-day the more

credulous are beginning to be hopeful again, and the time is ill chosen for urging your views, however reasonable. Wait a few days longer, and if relief has not then arrived, assert your opinion loudly. I will speak a word on your side, and many another good man, too, in the Council. We have nothing but kindness and mercy to look for from Valdez. To resist the King was a foolish game from the first, and to fight against famine, pestilence, and death, is sinful madness. God be with you, good people !”

“The Burgomaster is right,” said a dyer.

“And Van Swieten and Norden think as he does ; but Master Peter holds his seat by the Prince’s favour. The Spaniards may save us, but he loses his head when they march in ! Die we may, if die we must, so long as he and his live on the fat of the land and are satisfied.”

“There goes his wife,” said the master weaver, pointing to Maria ; “how well content she looks ! The buff-leather trade must be thriving. Hi ! Dame Burgomistress ! hi ! Carry our service to your husband, and tell him that his life is no doubt precious, but that ours, after all, is not a mere wisp of straw.”

“Yes, and tell him, too,” shouted a cattle-dealer, who did not look as if he had suffered much yet from hunger, “tell him that oxen are good to kill, and the more the better, but that the good folks of Leyden——”

The speaker did not finish his sentence, for Master Aquanus had spied from the “Angulus” what was happening to the Burgomaster’s wife, and he had come out of his inn, and was now standing among the malcontents.

“Shame upon you !” he exclaimed, “for attacking a respectable lady in the street. Is this the Leyden fashion ? Take my hand, Dame Maria, and if I hear another word of abuse, I will call the town-watch. I know you. The gal-

lows still stands by the Blue Stone, where Master Van Bronkhorst had it set up for such as you. Which of you would like to handsel it?"

The men to whom this was addressed were not the bravest of their sex, and not another word was uttered as Aquanus led the young woman into the shelter of the Exchange Inn. The host's wife and daughter received Maria in their own rooms, which stood apart from the hostelry, and begged her to rest there till the throng should have dispersed. But Maria was anxious to get home, and when she explained that she must proceed at once, Van Aken offered his escort.

In the hall of the inn Von Dornburg was standing, and he was about to retire with a respectful bow, when Aquanus called him to speak with him.

"We are very busy here," he said, "for many a man is treating himself to a glass in honour of the good news. Do not take it amiss, Dame, but the Jonker will take you home quite as safely as I could; and you, Baron von Dornburg——"

"I am yours to command," replied Georg; and he and the young wife went out into the street.

For some minutes they walked on side by side in silence, each fancying they could hear the other's heart beat. At last the Jonker drew a deeper breath and spoke.

"Three long, long months have gone by since I came. Have I been brave, Maria?"

"Yes, Georg."

"But you can never imagine what it has cost me to keep my aching heart in chains, to guard my words, and blind my eyes. Once, only once, Maria, I must speak——"

"Never!" she interrupted him with resolute entreaty.

"Never! I know how nobly you have struggled; do not now weakly lose the glory of victory."

"Oh, hear me, Maria! this once only, hear me!"

"And what good will it do you to burden my soul with hearing your burning words? There is but one man living who may tell me that he loves me; and what I ought not to hear you ought not to say."

"Ought not?" he said in a tone of gentle reproach; and then he went on gloomily and bitterly: "You are right, very right. Even speech is forbidden me; my life must flow on for ever a stream of lead, and whatever may grow or blossom on the banks must be scentless and colourless. The golden sunlight is shrouded from me by clouds; all joys lie pale and dead in my heart; and all that ever delighted me is now mere emptiness and vanity. Do you even recognise in me the careless fellow that I once was?"

"Nay, try once more to be happy; try for my sake."

"It is past and gone," he murmured sadly. "You saw me at Delft, but you never really knew me. My eyes were like a pair of magical mirrors, in which every object that is reflected is beautified and transfigured; and they had their reward, for wherever they turned they met kindly glances. My heart could then embrace the whole world, and it beat so high and so lightly! Sometimes I was quite beside myself, and did not know which way to turn for sheer joyousness and vitality; I felt as though, like a cannon that bursts with being overcharged, I must fly into a thousand pieces—only not scattered about the world, but straight up to heaven at once. It was happiness, and yet it was a pain. Ah! I have felt it in Delft a score of times when you have been sweet and kind to me! And now, now! I still have wings—I still could fly—but I crawl about like a snail—for you will have it so."

"I will not have it so," answered Maria ; "you are very dear to me ; that I may frankly confess, and to see you as you are now is a great grief to me. And now, if you have any regard for me—and I know full well that you have—I implore you, cease to inflict such misery on me. You are very dear to me ; I have said it, and it has to be said, that all may be clear between us. You are dear to me as the sweet bygone days of my youth are, as sweet dreams are, as a strain of delicious music is, which soothes and refreshes our soul when we hear or remember it ; but you are no more to me, and you never can be. You are dear to me, and I wish that you should remain so, and you can only remain so by keeping the oath which you have sworn."

"Sworn ?" said Georg, "sworn ?"

"Yes, sworn," repeated Maria, standing still, "on my husband's breast on his birthday, after we had been singing. Remember it well ! you swore then an unspoken vow ; I know it, no less certainly than that I swore to be faithful to my husband at the altar. If you can give me the lie, do so."

Georg shook his head and answered with growing vehemence :

"You read my soul ; our hearts know each other like two trusted friends—as the earth sees the moon and the moon the earth. What would one be without the other ? Why, why should they be parted ? Have you walked along a lane through a wood ? There are two ruts running side by side, and never crossing, never meeting. They are kept asunder by the axle-tree, as we are by our vows."

"Say, rather, by our honour."

"By our honour. But presently you come to a spot where the road ends, at a plantation or a charcoal heap,

and there the ruts cut across each other ; well, at this hour I feel my path has come to an abrupt end. I cannot go on any farther like this ; I cannot—the horses will run away into the thicket, and the chariot will be wrecked on the roots and rocks.”

“ And with it our honour. Not another word ; come, we must walk faster. Do you see the lights in the windows ? Every one wants to show that he rejoices at the good news, and our house must not remain in darkness.”

“ Do not hurry so ; Barbara will take care of that ; and we so soon must part ! And you know you said that I was dear to you.”

“ Do not torture me ! ” pleaded the young wife, pathetically.

“ I do not wish to torture you, Maria, but you must at least hear me. It was in earnest—in solemn earnest—that I pledged myself to that vow I swore in silence, and I had hoped to redeem it by death. You heard how I flung myself, like a madman, into the midst of the Spaniards, at the storming of the fort of Boschhuizen, in July. Your ribbon—the blue ribbon of Delft, that ribbon of heaven’s own blue—fluttered from my shoulder-knot as I rushed upon the swords and spears. But I was not to die ; I came safely out of the *melée*. Oh, Maria, for that oath’s sake I have suffered torments unutterable ! Release me from it ; let me once—only this once—tell you, Maria, —”

“ Stop, Georg, say no more ! ” she hastily implored him ; “ I will not—I must not hear you ; not to-day nor to-morrow—never, never ; through all eternity, never ! ”

“ Once—for once I will—I must tell you that I love you ; that my life and salvation—my peace and honour —”

"Cease, Jonker von Dornburg ; do not speak another word. There is our house ; you are our guest. If you say a single word more such as those last to the wife of your friend——"

"Maria, Maria ! stay, do not knock. How can you so heartlessly wreck the whole happiness of a human life——?"

But the door was opened, and Maria stood on the threshold. Georg stood opposite to her for a moment, stretching out his hand as craving hers to save him, and he said desperately :

"Rejected——thrust out to death and desolation ! Maria, Maria, why have you done this ?"

She put her hand into his.

"That we may remain worthy of each other," she said.

She wrenched her cold hand from his clasp, and went into the house ; but he wandered for hours through the illuminated streets like a drunken man, and at last flung himself on to his bed with an aching brain. On a little table by his side lay a note-book ; he took it up, and with trembling fingers began to write. Many times his pencil stood still, or he lay sighing deeply and gazing into vacancy. At last he threw the book aside, and watched uneasily for the morning.

CHAPTER XXX.

SOON after sunrise Georg sprang from his bed, pulled out his knapsack, and began to fill it with his few possessions ; but the note-book was not packed in with the rest. It was still quite early when the organist came into the courtyard with the first of the workmen coming to their work. The Jonker saw him, and went to meet him at the gate. The musician's face showed but slight traces of the famine, but his whole frame quivered with agitation, and his colour came and went as, unhesitatingly and in breathless haste, he related the object of his early visit to the Burgomaster's house.

A Spanish envoy had brought in letters the day before to Van der Werff, shortly after the arrival of the Prince's messenger. One of these letters was from young Nicolas Matenesse, and contained merely the information that Henrika's sister had reached Leyderdorp with Belotti, and had found a home, for the time, at a farm belonging to the elder Baron van Wibisma. She was very ill, and longed to see her sister. The Burgomaster had given this letter to Henrika, and she had at once hastened off to Wilhelm, to entreat him to help her to quit the town, and to escort her himself as far as the Spanish lines.

Wilhelm had a hard battle to fight ; no sacrifice seemed

to him too great if he could only see Anna once more ; and what the messengers had succeeded in doing, he surely could do. But ought he to help the one hostage for the authorities of the town to make her escape—ought he to cheat the gate-keepers, and desert his post ? Since the day when Henrika had appealed to him to fetch her sister from Lugano to Holland, Georg had been fully informed as to her whole history ; and he knew, too, how the musician's heart was engaged in the matter.

"I must, and yet I must not !" cried Wilhelm. "I have passed a terrible night ; put yourself in my place or in Mistress Henrika's !"

"Ask for leave till to-morrow," said Georg, decidedly. "When it is dark, I will conduct Henrika with you outside the town. Only she must solemnly promise to return to it if it is at last surrendered. So far as I am concerned, I am no longer pledged to serve under the English flag ; four weeks since we had leave granted us to enlist in the service of the Netherlands. One word to Captain van der Laen, and I am my own master."

"Thank you very heartily ! But Mistress Henrika strictly forbids my availing myself of your services."

"Folly ! I am going with you, and when we have reached our destination, I shall cut my way through to join the Gueux. The Council will not grieve at our departing, for when Henrika and I are outside, there will be two mouths less to fill in Leyden. The sky is overcast ; we may hope for a dark night. Van Duivenvoorde is Captain of the watch at the Hoogewoerde Gate. He knows us both, and will let us pass out ; I will speak to him. Is the farm far in the village ?"

"No ; quite at the beginning, on the road to Leyden."

"Very good ; we will meet again at four o'clock at the Exchange Inn."

"But Henrika——"

"It will be soon enough if she is told who her companions are when she is at the gate."

When Georg betook himself at the appointed time to the Exchange Inn he was informed that Henrika had received yet another letter from Nicolas, who had himself given it to the courier. It contained only these words :

"Until midnight the Spanish pass-word is 'Lepanto.' Your father shall be told to-day that Anna is here."

When they had finally agreed to set out by the Hoogewoerde Gate at nine that evening, Georg went to his Captain and to the Commandant Van der Does, and procured from the former the leave of absence he required, and from Janus Dousa a letter to his friend Admiral Boisot. When he told his men that he was about to leave the town and to join the Gueux, they all declared that they would follow him, and live or die with him, and it was only with great difficulty that he persuaded them to remain behind.

As he passed the town-hall he slackened his pace ; the Burgomaster was always to be found there at this hour. Ought he to quit Leyden without taking leave of him ? No, no ; and yet, since the day before he felt he had lost all right to look him boldly in the face ; he dreaded meeting him, and he felt an alien and an outcast. So he hurried past the town-hall, saying to himself : "And if I do leave him without a word of farewell, what do I owe him ? I must pay for his kindness with pain and anguish—perhaps even with my life. Maria loved me before she loved him, and ere I go she shall know what she is and will for ever be to me."

It was dusk when he went back to his room ; he

desired the man-servant to carry his knapsack to Captain van Duivenvoorde, on guard at the Hoogewoerde Gate, and, placing his note-book inside the breast of his doublet, he went into the dwelling-house to bid adieu to Maria. He went up the steps, trembling with excitement, and paused when he reached the upper stair-landing. His heart beat so violently that he could hardly breathe. He did not know at which door to knock, and was oppressed with a vague dread. There he stood as if paralysed for some few minutes; then he pulled himself together, shook himself, and muttered to himself, "What a coward I am!" In an instant he had opened the door into the dining-room, and went in. Adrian was sitting at the table, with his books before him, by the light of a pine-torch. Georg asked him where his mother was:

"She is spinning in the parlour," said the boy.

"Go and fetch her; I have something of importance to tell her."

Adrian went, and returned with the message that Jonker Georg might wait in his father's sitting-room.

"Where is Barbara?" asked Georg.

"With Liesje." The Baron nodded, and took to pacing up and down by the long table, thinking to himself: "I cannot go thus; I must speak out from the bottom of my heart. Once, only once more, I will hear her tell me that she loves me. I will—I will. It may be dishonourable—it may be base; I will atone for it—atone for it with my life." While the young man walked about the room, Adrian was packing his books together, and could not help exclaiming:

"Why, Jonker, how badly you look to-day! It is enough to frighten one. Mother is in the next room; I hear the tinder-box snap; she is getting a light."

"Have you time for a message?" asked Georg.

"Yes; I have done."

"Then run to Wilhelm Corneliussohn, and tell him everything is settled. We are to meet at nine—punctually at nine."

"At the inn?" asked the lad.

"No, no; he knows; only make haste."

Adrian was on the point of starting, but Georg beckoned him to come close, and asked him in a whisper:

"Can you hold your tongue?"

"As mute as a fish."

"I am going to slip out of the town to-night, and perhaps I may never come back."

"You, Jonker—to-night?" asked the boy.

"Yes, dear fellow. Come here and give me a kiss at parting. Keep this little ring as a remembrance." The boy gave and took the kiss, and slipped the ring on to his finger; and his eyes were full of tears as he said:

"And you really mean it? Yes; we are hungry here! God knows I would go with you, if it were not for Liesje and mother. When will you come back?"

"Who can tell, my lad? Do not forget to love me, do you hear? to love me truly! Now, be off with you."

Adrian flew down stairs, and in another minute Georg was standing in Peter's room, face to face with Maria. The shutters were closed, and there were two tapers burning in the branched candlestick on the table.

"Thank you a thousand times for coming to speak to me," said he. "You passed judgment on me yesterday, and to-day——"

"I know what has brought you here," she replied gently. "Henrika has bade me good-bye, and I cannot detain her. She does not wish that you should accompany

her, but Master Wilhelm has told me about it. You are come to say farewell."

"Yes, Maria—farewell for ever."

"Nay, please God, we shall meet again. I know what it is that is driving you out of this place. You are right, Georg, good and noble; and if anything can soften a parting it is that; we may remember each other without a pang of bitterness. You will not forget us, and—as you well know—your memory will live here among great and small—in all our hearts——"

"And in yours too, Maria?"

"In mine too."

"Cling to it, cherish it; and when this hapless dust, which to-day still lives, and breathes, and loves, and is desperate, has been swept out of your path by the whirlwind, grant it still a green spot in your remembrance."

Maria shuddered, for deep desperation indeed glowed in the dull fire of his eyes, and full of agonising fear she cried out:

"What are you planning, Georg—for Christ's sake what are you thinking of doing?"

"Nothing wrong," he said dully. "Nothing violent. But we birds do not all pipe the same tune. Happy is he who slips on through the years with tepid blood and lukewarm joys; but my blood courses in hotter haste, and when my soul has once clasped an idea with its poulpe-like arms, it can never relinquish its hold but in death. I am going, never to return; but you and my devotion I carry with me to the battle, to the grave. I am going—I am going——"

"But, Georg, we must not part thus——"

"Then bid me stay. Only say: 'Here am I, and I pity you.' But do not encourage the abject wretch whom you have blinded, to look up, to open his eyes, and rejoice

in the beauties of creation ! And you stand there, trembling, hesitating, without a word for the man who loves you, for the man—the man——”

The young man's voice was choked with emotion ; he pressed his hand to his forehead and groaned. Then he seemed to collect his thoughts, and he went on in a low and sorrowful voice : “ I am here to tell you once more how my heart is unchangeably fixed on this one thought. I meant to have spoken words of sweeter meaning, but pain and regret infuse their bitterness into everything I can say. Take this little book ; I have written it all—everything that my heart longed to utter, and for which ordinary words have no language, in the form of verse. Read these pages, Maria, and if they can rouse any response in your soul, keep them. The honeysuckle in your garden needs a trellis to help it to grow and blossom, and these poor songs may serve as a support round which your remembrance of me, when I am gone, may clasp its tendrils and fondly cling. Read—yes, read, and then once more say you love me, or else send me away from you.”

“ Give it me,” Maria said ; and she opened the book with a trembling hand.

He drew back a little way, but his breath came quickly and his eyes followed hers as she read.

She began with the last song but one. He had written it shortly after he had come in the evening before, and it ran as follows :—

“ Joyous bustle fills the town,
In the windows lights are gleaming,
Through the highways to and fro
Happy, busy crowds are streaming.
Could such joys but last for ever !
Last for ever ? Brief delight !
Dead the lights—love finds no answer—
Past and gone that festal night.”

The last poem of all Georg had hastily written during the night, and in it he bewailed his hapless fate. Once—at least once—she must and should hear him ; he would write an appeal such as she had never listened to before. She had read the first set of verses in silence with her eyes only, but now she moved her lips and read quickly and in a low voice, but still audibly :

“ Now should it sound like solemn thunder pealing,
Then soft as flutes through sweet May moonlight stealing ;
Anon storm Heaven in jubilant elation,
Or sob like Philomel in desolation.
And this my song, perennial and undying,
Shall rouse mankind to listen to my sighing,
Resound through earth's deep caves and secret places,
Beyond our grosser air through skyey spaces,
Throughout the universe—an invocation
Waking weird echoes from the whole creation.
Those echoes, swelling to a suppliant choir,
Shall pray thee hear and answer my desire.
Ev'n when the ivy o'er my grave is creeping,
That magic strain of singing, sighing, weeping,
Shall still be heard, and pierce the tomb's dark portal,
A mighty song, insistant and immortal.”

Maria read on ; her heart beat faster and her breath came quicker, and by the time she had got to the last words tears had started to her eyes, and she had lifted the book with both hands, prepared to fling it from her and throw her arms round the writer's neck. He, meanwhile, had stood in front of her as if spellbound, and listened with ravishment to the soaring flight of his own verse. Quivering with passion, he yet controlled himself till she had read the last word, raised her eyes from the page, and held the book aloft ; but then all his self-command was blown to the winds, and he vehemently exclaimed : “ Maria, sweetest wifely woman—the only woman——”

"Wifely?" The word found a questioning, warning echo in her own soul, and she felt as if an icy cold hand had been laid upon her heart. The intoxicating fumes suddenly lifted, and as she saw him before her, his arms open, his eyes full of flame, she shrank back, sobered to an intense horror of him and of herself. Instead of tossing the book aside and rushing to meet him, she tore it across and said proudly: "Here are your verses, Jonker van Dornburg; take them with you." And she added in gentler tones, but with a dignity that she recovered with some effort: "I can remember you without this book. We both have let ourselves dream; now let us wake! Farewell. I will pray God to protect you. Give me your hand, Georg, and when you return we shall welcome you to our house as a friend."

As she spoke she turned away and merely assented with a silent bow, when he cried after her:


"It is all over—all over!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

GEORG went down the stairs like a man who has been stunned ; the two halves of the note-book, in which, ever since the wedding at Delft, he had been in the habit of writing verses addressed to Maria, lay in his hand. A bright blaze in the kitchen lighted up the hall ; he followed its guidance, and before he even returned Barbara's friendly greeting, he went straight up to the hearth and flung the leaves which contained the pure and fragrant emanations of a sweet and tender blossom into the flames. "Oho, Jonker !" cried the widow. "A quick fire is not good for all meat ; what are you burning there ?"

"Only some nonsense—some papers," he said. "Be easy, the worst they could do would be to weep and put the fire out. Now they are ashes. There go the sparks in procession through the charred, black paper. How pretty ! they come out and vanish again like a funeral train with torches in a pitch-black night. Sleep soundly, poor children—sleep in peace, poor little poems. Look, mother, they curl up and writhe almost convulsively, as if it hurt them to be burned."

"What things to say !" interrupted the widow, as she poked the burnt volume into the fire with the tongs, and then she added, as she tapped her forehead : "Many a time



have I felt truly sorry for you. High-sounding words, like those of the Psalms, are not for every-day use and our kitchen. If you belonged to me you would often hear a piece of my mind. Remember the proverb: Slow and steady wins the race."

"Good advice to a traveller," said Georg, holding out his hand to Barbara. "Farewell, good mother. I cannot stay here any longer; in half an hour's time I shall have turned my back on this town."

"You are going then! well, as you think best; or are you taking Mistress Henrika in tow? A noble's son and a noble's daughter! Like to like; but no, there has never been anything between you two. She has a good heart, but I could wish you something better than a papistical turncoat."

"Then Henrika has told you——"

"She has this moment left me. Well, well, she has her own kith and kin out there; and for us it is difficult to divide a plum into a dozen mouthfuls. I wished her God - speed with sincere goodwill — but you, Georg, you——"

"I shall conduct her out of the town, and then—you cannot blame me—I shall go over to the Gueux."

"To the Gueux! That is a very different thing; that is right. There you will be in the very place for you. Boldly conceived, Jonker, and bravely planned! give me your hand; and if you should meet my boy—he commands a ship of his own. Good heavens! what a good idea—you can wait a minute longer? Truitje, come here. Upstairs in the painted chest are the worsted hose I knitted for him. Make haste and fetch them. He may want them in the wet autumn weather and at sea. You will take them for me?"

"With all the pleasure in life; and let me thank you for all your kindness; you have been like a dear kind mother to me." He took the widow's hand, and neither of them attempted to conceal how dear each was to the other, and how bitter the parting was. The maid-servant had given him the knitted hose, and as they said good-bye, many tears ran down on to them, and Barbara, remarking that they were wet before they were rained on, shook them dry, and gave them to the Jonker.

The night was dark, but still and even sultry; the travellers were met at the Hoogewoerde Gate by Van Duivenvoorde; an old corporal of the watch carried a lantern before him, and opened the gate. The Captain embraced his brave and valued comrade, Dornburg; a very few words of farewell, or God-speed, were spoken under the walls of the fortified gateway, and the three refugees were outside and free.

For some time they walked in silence through the darkness; Wilhelm knew the way and went first; the Baron kept close to Henrika's side. All was silent excepting that from time to time they heard a word of command from the ramparts, the toll of the tower-clock, or the bark of a dog. Henrika had recognised Georg by the light of the lantern, and when, presently, Wilhelm stopped to ascertain whether there was any water in the ditches across which he wanted to lead his companions, she observed in a low voice:

"I did not count upon your escort, Jonker."

"I knew that, but I, like you, wished to leave the town."

"And you will have the benefit of our knowledge of the pass-word. Well, then, remain with us."

"Until I see you in safety, Mistress."

"The walls of Leyden are already standing between you and the danger from which you are flying."

"I do not understand you."

"So much the better."

Wilhelm turned round and begged his companions to be silent. Without another word they went on until they reached the high road, which they had hitherto avoided, close in front of the Spanish camp.

A Spanish sentinel challenged them. "Lepanto," said Wilhelm, and without let or hindrance they went forward into the camp.

A coach with four horses, a sort of ark hung between two very small fore wheels and two gigantic hind wheels, went slowly past them. It was conveying Mistress Magdalena Moons, the daughter of a highly-respected family of Dutch—all high in office—back to the Hague, from paying a visit to her admirer, the Commander-in-Chief, who subsequently became her husband. Indeed, there were plenty of women in the camp, so Henrika's presence there attracted no attention. A few wretched camp followers sat at the doors of the tents mending the soldiers' clothes, while outside one of the officers' tents were a party of over-dressed huzzies throwing dice and drinking with their companions. Behind the Commander's quarters there was a bright, illuminated spot, where, under a canopy, several confessionals and an altar had been erected. On the altar stood lighted tapers, and over it swung a silver lamp, while a steady stream of dark figures flowed to the confessionals—Spanish warriors, whose figures could be distinguished as the light of the tapers fell on their helmets and breastplates.

The low chanting of the priests and the murmur of penitents and worshippers were drowned by the loud tones

of the boozing German mercenaries, the neighing and stamping of chargers, and the laughter of the officers and their women; but the shrill tinkle of the mass-bell was heard now and again in brisk vibration above the hubbub of the camp. When they reached the village, the pass-word once more worked its charm, and they gained the first houses unchecked.

"Here we are," said Wilhelm, with a sigh of relief "Take advantage of the darkness, Jonker, and go on at once till you have left the Spaniards behind you."

"No, my friend, you are still among them, and I have a fancy to share your danger. I will return with you to Leyden, and then try to reach Delft; meanwhile, I will stay here and watch, and warn you in case of need."

"Nay, let us part here, Georg; it may be hours before I return."

"I have time—horribly too much time. I will wait. There, the door is opened." And he laid his hand on his sword, but he soon left hold of it, for it was Belotti who came out to them and greeted his Signorina. Henrika followed him into the house, and there stood talking with him in low tones till Georg spoke to her once more.

"Mistress van Hoogstraten," he said, "I may surely hope that you will at any rate bid me God-speed?"

"Farewell, Baron van Dornburg," she replied coolly; but she went a step towards him. Georg, too, went forward to meet her, and held out his hand. She hesitated a moment, then she gave him hers, and asked, so softly that he only could hear her:

"You love Maria?"

"What! am I to confess?"

"Do not refuse me this last and first request. If you

know how to be generous, answer me frankly ; I will not betray you. Do you love Dame van der Werff?"

"Yes, Mistress."

Henrika drew a deep breath, and asked again :

"And you are rushing out into the storm in order to forget her?"

"No, Madam."

"Tell me, then, why you have come out of Leyden?"

"To meet the death that becomes a soldier."

She went close up to him, and exclaimed in a tone of scorn that cut Georg to the heart :

"And you too ! It falls upon all—knights and maidens, wives and widows—it spares none ! Sorrow, and still no end of sorrow. Farewell, Georg. We may laugh at each other, or weep for each other, just as suits our mood. A heart pierced with seven swords—a picture full of meaning ! Let us each wear a blood-red scarf instead of green and blue. Give me your hand once more, and God be with you !"

Henrika beckoned to the musician, and together they followed Belotti up the steep and narrow stair.

Wilhelm was then left in a small room, beyond which was a second, in which a handsome little boy of three was playing with an old Italian nurse. In a third room, which, like all the others in the farm-house, was so low that a tall man could hardly stand upright in it, Henrika's sister was lying on a large bed, above which a canopy, after the fashion of a baldachino, was supported on four little pillars. Pine-torches shed a feeble light in the large cavernous room. Their orange-coloured flare was lost under the canopy, and the sufferer's face was hardly recognisable. Henrika just nodded to the Italian woman and the child as she passed through the room, and hastening into the one beyond, flew

up to the bed, and, falling on her knees, clasped her sister passionately in her arms and covered her cheeks with fervent kisses.

She could say nothing but "Anna, Anna !" and the sick woman had no words but "Henrika." This lasted for some minutes ; then the girl sprang to her feet, took down a pine-torch, and held it so as to light up her long-lost sister's features. How pale and thin they were ! But she was still beautiful—still the same as ever. A strange mixture of pleasure and pain took possession of Henrika ; all that had been hard and cold in her nature seemed to warm and melt, and the relief of tears, which she had not known for many a long day, came back to her in that hour.

By degrees this spring-tide of feeling began to ebb, and the confusion of loving appeals and broken phrases settled down into orderly question and answer. When Anna was informed that the musician Wilhelm had escorted her sister she expressed a wish to see him, and as he came up to her bedside she held out both hands to welcome him.

"Ah, Master, Master !" she exclaimed, "in what a state do you see me once more ! Henrika, this is the best of men, the only disinterested friend I have ever known in this world."

How painfully agitating were the next few hours ! Belotti and the old Italian nurse would now and again take up the tale to relieve their suffering mistress, and by degrees Henrika and Wilhelm had before them the complete picture of a life that had been disastrously wrecked, though worthy of a better fate. Fear, anxiety, and agonising doubt had tormented Anna from the very first day when she had become the wife of the reckless adventurer and gambler who had succeeded in dazzling her young and inexperienced heart. To a brief intoxication had succeeded a terrible

sobering and reaction. Her first child was still an infant at the breast when Don Luis, with unheard-of baseness, desired her to go with him to the house of a certain notorious Marchesa, in whose disreputable gambling salon he had for months spent evening after evening and night after night. She had indignantly refused to comply, but he had coolly insisted and threatened. Then the blood of the Hoogstratens had asserted itself, and she had fled at once, and without a word of parting, to Lugano. There her child had found a home with an old serving-woman of her mother's, while she had gone to Rome, not as an adventuress, but firmly bent on a worthy aim. She purposed to cultivate her musical talents in the new school of Palestrina and Nannini, and so acquire the power of bringing up her boy by the exercise of her art, independently of his father and of her own family, who had never troubled themselves as to her fate. She was venturing everything; still a definite hope lay before her, for an eminent prelate, a great patron of music, to whom she had letters of introduction from Brussels, and who knew her voice, had promised to procure for her, when she should return, an appointment to teach singing in a convent for the education of young girls of rank at Milan. This appointment was in his hands, and the worthy priest also took care, before she set out, to provide her with letters to his friends in the Eternal City.

Her abrupt departure from Rome had been prompted by hearing that Don Luis had found their boy and carried him off. She could not part with her child, and not finding her husband in Milan, she followed his track, and at last joined him in Naples. D'Avila restored the boy to her, but not till she had declared herself willing to surrender to him the allowance which she was still receiving from her aunt.

The long journey with its agitations and hardships had exhausted her strength, and she returned to Milan, crushed and ill.

Her patron had taken care to keep the appointment as singing mistress open for her; but she could fulfil the duties which the lady superintendent of the convent required of her only for a very short time; her illness rapidly increased, and a bad cough spoiled her voice. Then she went back to Lugano once more, and there tried to indemnify her poor and honest friends by selling her jewels; but ere long the generous and high-minded artist was reduced to dependence on the charity of a waiting-woman. Until about six months previously she had not suffered actual want; but her good nurse's husband had died, and they lived in anxious care for their daily bread; then a mother's love had broken Anna's pride — she wrote to her father the letter of a penitent daughter crushed by misery, but she received no answer. At last the poor creature, ill herself and perishing with her child, had stooped to the extreme of humiliation; she had implored the man, whom she could never think of but with horror and contempt, not to leave his child to grow up a beggar. The letter containing this cry of despair had reached Don Luis in Holland very shortly before his death. From him no help was to be hoped for; but Belotti had come, and now at least she was at home; her sister and her friend were standing by her side, and Henrika even encouraged her to hope for her father's forgiveness.

It was past midnight, and Georg was still waiting below for his comrade's return. The noise and bustle of the camp were beginning to die away, and the lantern which had lighted up the large lower room of the farm-house was now burning low. The German had no fellow-occupant but

instruments of tilth, harness, and stores of vegetables and grain piled up against the walls, and he was in no mood even to cast a glance round him at these various objects. There was no gleam of pleasure for him far or near ; he felt humiliated, guilty, weary of his life. His self-respect lay in the dust, and he saw before him a gray and joyless future, full of bitterness and vain regret. He had nothing left to wish for but an early end to it all ; and yet, now and then, a smiling picture of his distant home rose before his fancy, but it vanished as he remembered the dignified figure of the Burgomaster, his own horrible weakness of purpose, and the repulse he had suffered. He was full of an intense spite against himself, and longed with vehement impatience for the rattle of arms, the thunder of cannon, and the mad struggle of man to man. The time slipped by without his heeding it, but presently his famished vitals began to crave agonisingly for food. There were turnips in plenty lying by the wall, and he ate one after another till he began to enjoy a long-forgotten sense of repletion. Then he sat down on a dough-trough to consider how he might succeed in making his way to the Gueux. He knew neither how nor where to find them, but woe to the man who should try to oppose him ! His arm and sword were strong, and there were Spaniards enough at hand who might happen to feel them both. His impatience was becoming intolerable, and it was a welcome diversion when he heard steps approaching, and a man entered the house-place. He had set his back against the wall, holding his sword with his arms crossed, and he now shouted a loud "halt" to the late comer. He, on his part, drew his sword, and when Georg asked in imperious tones what he wanted there, he answered in a youthful voice, but with pride and determination :

"I might rather ask you that! I am at home here in my father's house."

"Ah!" exclaimed Dornburg, smiling, for by the dim light of the lantern he had recognised the speaker. "If you are young Matenesse van Wibisma, you have nothing to fear from me."

"I am; but what brings you out here at night, sword in hand, on our premises?"

"I am warming the wall for my own pleasure—or, if you want to know the truth, I am on guard."

"In our house?"

"Yes, Jonker. There is some one upstairs with your cousin who has no wish to be surprised by the Spaniards. But you go up in peace; I have heard from Captain van Duivenvoorde what a brave youth you are."

"From Warmond!" exclaimed Nicolas, excitedly. "Tell me what brings you here and who you are."

"A soldier in the cause of freedom—a German, Georg von Dornburg."

"Oh! wait here a while, pray. I will return quite soon. Do you know whether Mistress van Hoogstraten —"

"She is up there," replied Georg, pointing upwards.

Nicolas flew upstairs with a few long strides, and calling his cousin, told her in hot haste that her father had had a bad fall from his horse out hunting, and was lying much hurt. He had broken out in furious language when Nicolas had first spoken to him of Anna, but presently had of his own accord asked him to tell all he knew of her, and had even attempted to come from his bed to see her. He might actually have succeeded in getting up, but his strength had failed him. If his father could come to see her next day, she might tell him that she craved to

be forgiven ; her father was quite ready to do what he considered his duty in the matter.

Nicolas evaded all Henrika's questions, and only inquired briefly as to Anna's health and about the friend from Leyden of whom Georg had spoken. When he heard it was the organist, he entreated her to warn him to return to the town in good time and under his escort ; then he took a hasty leave and ran downstairs again.

Wilhelm very soon joined him, and Henrika was coming down with him to see Georg once more, but no sooner did she hear his voice than she turned defiantly on her heel and returned to her sister.

The musician found the Baron and Nicolas in eager colloquy.

"Nay, nay," Dornburg was saying, feelingly, "my way can never be yours."

"I am eighteen now."

"It is not that, it is not that. I have seen you behave bravely before now, and your will is as resolute as a man's ; but life has flowers in store for you yet, please God ! and sweet ones too. You are just setting out, and your sword will win you fame and good fortune yet for yourself and your country in freedom and contentment ; while I, on the other hand, I—give me your hand and promise solemnly——"

"My hand is yours, but I can promise nothing. With you or without you I am going to join the Gueux."

Georg looked in the brave lad's face with kindly approbation.

"Is your mother alive ?" he said gently.

"No, Jonker."

"Come along then. We shall each find what we look for among the Gueux."

Nicolas grasped the hand that Georg held out to him, and Wilhelm, going up to the young fellow, said :

"I expected no less of you after the scenes by the church and in Quatgelat's tavern."

"It was you who first opened my eyes," cried Nicolas. "Now, come ; we will go straight across the camp ; they all know me."

On the road the lad kept close to Georg, and when the German remarked that he would have a hard battle to fight with his father, he replied :

"I know it, and it grieves me, grieves me deeply ; but I cannot act differently. The word traitor shall never cling to our name."

"Your cousin Matenesse, Seigneur of Rivière, is likewise devoted to the good cause."

"But my father is of a different mind. He has the heart to hope good things of the Spaniards. Of the Spaniards!—ah ! I have come to know them well these last few months ! A brave Leyden lad—you must know him well by his nickname of Leeuw (the lion), which he well deserved—was taken prisoner by them in fair fight. I shudder when I think of it ; they hung him up head downwards and tortured him to death. I was by, and not a word of what they said did I lose : ' If all Holland could be treated in the same way, the land and the people alike.' That is what they wish. And I hear these things every day of my life. No treatment is too foul for us, and the King feels just the same as the men do. But some one else may serve a master who tortures and scorns us ; not I. My holy religion is eternal and indestructible. If it is held in detestation by many of the Gueux I do not care, if only they will help me to break the Spanish fetters."

Talking thus, they traversed the Spanish camp, where

by this time all were sunk in sleep ; then they came upon a German company of infantry who were still drinking noisily. At the farther end of the camp a market-dealer and his wife were collecting the remains of their wares.

Wilhelm had walked in silence behind his two companions, for his heart was stirred with deep emotion ; pain and pleasure struggled in him for the mastery, and he was intoxicated with exalted feeling ; but in front of the market-booth he suddenly pulled up and pointed to some loaves which were being tossed one after the other into a bread-box. Hunger, too, was a living fact,—a too living and powerful fact,—in the town yonder, and it was not surprising that Wilhelm should go up to the market-folk and buy their last ham and all the loaves they had left. Nicolas laughed to see him carrying the bread under his arm, but Georg said :

“ You have never yet looked famine in the face, Jonker. These loaves are medicine for the worst sickness known.”

When they reached the gate, Georg had the Captain roused, and announced to him that Nicolas, too, was for the future one of the Gueux. Duivenvoorde wished the boy God-speed, and offered him some money that he might supply himself in Delft with various necessaries and have something to live on for a week or two ; but Nicolas refused his comrade's offer, for he had at his girdle a purse full of gold pieces. A jeweller at the Hague had given them to him yesterday as the price of his aunt's emerald ring. He showed this treasure to the Captain, and then exclaimed :

“ Now, onwards, Jonker van Dornburg. I know where we shall find them, and you, Captain van Duivenvoorde, tell the Burgomaster and Janus Dousa what has become of me.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

A WEEK had gone by since Henrika's escape — seven dreadful days of famine. Maria had heard from Wilhelm that young Matenesse had accompanied Georg to join the Gueux ; that was well. That turbulent torrent was in its proper place, flowing with the wild, roaring, rushing stream. She wished him success, life, and happiness ; but, strange to say, since the moment when she had torn his poems in twain, her remembrance of him had sunk as completely into the background as in the days before the Spaniards had beleaguered the town. Indeed, after that crowning victory over herself, and after parting from the Baron, the young wife had felt a peculiar and unusual contentment in the midst of her sorrows and anxieties. She had judged herself sternly, and the intrinsic light of the purest diamond is never visible in all its beauty till it has suffered under the hand of the cutter. She felt thankfully glad that she could now look Peter freely in the face and give expression to her love for him, and ask his love in return. It is true that, under the pressure of his trouble, he hardly seemed to notice her and her care for him, but she felt, all the same, that much that she could say and do comforted and pleased him. The young woman did not suffer keenly from the dearth of food, while it told severely on Barbara,

and sorely weakened her strong frame. She would sit dejected in front of the fireless hearth and empty pans, and no longer took the trouble to quill or plait her deep-frilled cap and ruff. It was now Maria's part to raise her courage, and to remind her of her son, the Captain of the Sea-Gueux, who might before long be at Leyden with the relieving forces.

On the 6th of September the Burgomaster's wife was going home from an early walk. Autumn mists thickened the air, and a sea-breeze drove the fine damp spray through the streets. The dripping trees had long since been stripped of their leaves, not by wind and weather, but by men, women, and children, who had carried off the caterpillars' food as vegetables for their own pot. In the Schagen Steeg Maria saw Adrian, and overtook him; the lad was slouching wearily along, and counting aloud as he went. His mother called to him, and asked him why he was not at school, and what he was doing.

"I am counting," said he; "I have got as far as nine."

"Nine?"

"Nine bodies I have met; the master has dismissed us from school for Magister Dirks is dead, and to-day we were but thirteen. There, they are bringing another this way."

Maria drew her kerchief more closely over her face, and went on. A tall, narrow house stood on the left hand, in which a shoemaker lived, a man of merry wit, over whose door hung two doggerel inscriptions. The first was as follows—

"Here, flat below and round above,
Are shoes for every buyer;
If David does not find them fit,
Perhaps they'll suit Goliath."

and the other—

"When Israel walked in the desert of yore,
Through forty years' wanderings the same shoes he wore ;
But if now-a-days we could make them as strong,
The shoemaker's trade would not thrive very long."

It was on the back ridge of his roofs that we saw the stork's nest—it was now empty. The red-billed visitors did not usually fly southwards so early in the autumn, and a few still were left in Leyden, standing meditatively on the roofs. What could have become of the worthy cobbler's favoured guests? Yesterday morning their host, who was wont, on their arrival in March, to help to secure the nest that brought good luck to the roof on which it was built—yesterday morning he had stolen up to the gable, and with his cross-bow had shot down first the mother bird and then her mate as he flew home. It had gone hard with him to do such a thing, and during the commission of the deed his wife had sat weeping in the kitchen ; but when the cravings of famine are gnawing a man's vitals, and when he sees those dearest to him dying of want, he cannot stop to think of old affections or future good fortune, but seeks some immediate succour. But the storks were sacrificed too late, for the shoemaker's son, his nearly full-grown apprentice, had that night closed his eyes for ever. Loud lamentations fell on Maria's ear from the open shop-door, and Adrian observed :

"Jakob is dead, and Mabel will not last long. This morning their father was shouting curses after me on account of my father. He was the cause, he said, of every body's perishing. Is there no bread again to-day, mother? Barbel has some biscuit left, and I feel so badly. As for that endless meat, I cannot get it down."

"Perhaps to-day we may be able to find a morsel. But we have to be very saving with the bread, child."

In the hall of their own house they found a servant dressed in black ; he had come to announce the death of the Prince's Commissary, Dietrich van Bronkhorst. Last night—Sunday evening—the plague had cut off the strong man in his prime.

Maria knew, as she heard of this terrible loss, that henceforth the whole responsibility of whatever might happen would fall on her husband's shoulders. She had heard, too, that a letter had arrived from Valdez, in which he pledged his word as a nobleman that if the town would only surrender to the King's mercy it should be spared, and especially to grant free departure to her husband with Van der Does and the other instigators to resistance. The Spanish forces should be withdrawn, and Leyden garrisoned with only a few German troops. He invited Van der Werff and the Seigneur of Nordwyk to Leyderdorp as mediators, and whatever the issue, even if the negotiations came to nothing, he promised to send them home unharmed, under a safe conduct. Finally, Maria knew, too, that her husband had called together, for this very day, an extraordinary meeting of the Council, the law officers, and all the chief men of the town, as well as the principal citizens. But none of this had come to her knowledge directly from Peter himself ; she had heard it from the Town-clerk's wife and other friendly gossips.

A great change had come over her husband in these last few days. He went and came, pale and gloomy ; in his own house he kept aloof from the family, silent, and consuming himself, as it were, in his own sorrow. When his wife, obeying the impulse of her heart, tried to speak some words of encouragement, he dismissed her shortly and impatiently. Night brought him no sleep, and he left his bed before dawn to walk restlessly up and down the

rose to go, and as he left her who could no longer smile, he turned back once more, and with a feeble smile.

As yet a hour passed, when she went at once to the city, and there found Doctor Boninus. He saw as usual, and as she entered the room, and told her that her son was over with the small little creature, and that her mother's digestion had been very much improved, but the stomach refused to do its work, and he was unable to think of saving her.

"The worst is—the worst not yet!" cried Maria, who was now so accustomed to be hopeful as a mother who cannot conceive of the possibility that such a loss as the loss of her child, even when the child is already dead, and the doctor is in and saying, "Last, Lisa, look at me. Take a little of this nice milk—just a few drops. Tiny Elizabeth, you must not care it."

Peter had come into the room unobserved, and had heard her last words. With choked pulses he looked down at his father, and his broad shoulders shook as he said to the Doctor in husky tones, "Will she die?"

"Yes, my friend, I think so! But hold up your head: you have still much left to you. Van Loo has lost all five from the plague."

Peter shuddered violently: then he left the room, his head sunk on his breast, and without noticing Maria Boninus followed him into his study, and laid his hand on his arm.

"The scrap of life that is left to us is being made bitter enough, Peter," said he. "Barbara tells me they laid a corpse at your door this morning."

"Yes. As I went out the ghastly face greeted me—it was that of a young lad. The lives that death reaps they lay

on my soul. Whichever way I look—the dead! whatever I hear—curses! Have I the right to dispose of so many lives? By day and by night I see nothing before my eyes but sorrow and death—and yet, Lord! Lord! save me from going mad.” Peter clasped his hands on his forehead as he spoke, and Bontius could find no word of consolation.

“And I,” he exclaimed, “I myself! My wife and the little one are down with the fever, and I am on my feet day and night—not to heal the sick and suffering, but to see them die. All that we have learned in years of weary toil is a mere mockery in these days, and yet the poor creatures sigh hopefully as soon as I feel their pulse. But things cannot go on like this; it is impossible. Seventy deaths the day before yesterday, eighty-six yesterday, and among them two of my own colleagues.”

“And no prospect of any improvement?”

“To-morrow the ninety will be a hundred, and the one hundred will soon mount up to two—three—four—five; till at last there will be one man left, and no one even to bury him.”

“The plague-stricken houses are closed, and we still have cattle and horses.”

“But the contagion exhales through doors and shutters, and since the last bread and the last malt-cake were given out, and men have nothing left to live on but meat, meat, and nothing but meat—and only a morsel of that each day—sickness breaks out constantly in forms never before heard of, described in no books, and for which no cure has yet been found. This pouring water into bottomless jars is too much for me; my brain is no steadier than yours. Farewell, till to-morrow.”

“To-day, to-day—you will come to the meeting at the town-hall?”

"Not I, indeed! Do what you feel you can answer for; I follow my own calling, which at present means closing men's eyes and certifying their death. If this goes on much longer there will be nothing else to do by way of medical practice."

"To put it plainly: In my place you would treat with Valdez."

"In your place? nay, I am not you; I am a leech—one whose duty it is to wage battle against death and suffering. Since Bronkhorst's death you are at the head of affairs in the town. Find a scrap of bread no bigger than half your hand to eat with the meat, or else—I love my country and its liberties as well as any other man—or else——"

"Or else?"

"Or else leave death to reap his harvest. You are no physician."

Bontius nodded to his friend, and left him. The Burgomaster stood, passing his fingers through his hair and staring out of the window, till presently Barbara came into the room, and, laying his official dress on a chair, asked him with affected calm:

"May I give Adrian some of the last biscuit that is left? His stomach turns against the meat. He is lying on his bed all doubled up."

Peter turned paler, and said dully:

"Yes, give it him, and send for the Doctor."

"Maria and Bontius are with him."

The Burgomaster changed his dress with a feeling of aversion towards each separate garment. He hated the rich garb of office as he did the functions which entitled him to wear it, and which, till within the last few weeks, he had exercised with so much self-confidence and satisfaction.

Before leaving the house he went to see Adrian. The lad was lying in Barbara's room, complaining of horrible pains, and asking whether he, too, must die. Peter shook his head, but Maria kissed him, and said :

"No, no, certainly not."

The Burgomaster had no time to linger ; his wife called to him to wait as he went through the anteroom, but he hurried down the stairs without hearing what she had to say to him, and she returned to Adrian's bedside. As she held the boy's clammy hand, she thought with a pang of the swift death that had overtaken so many of his companions ; she thought of sweet little Elizabeth, and her fancy followed Peter to the Council, and heard his firm voice contending for resistance till the last pound of meat was gone and the last man left standing ; and, indeed, she was ready to stand by him, though she knew what it must come to : patient endurance for freedom's sake, or, if God should so will it, a martyr's death in the cause—to die as Jacoba and Leonhard had died, and Peter's noble father !

So the weary hours went by one after another ; when Adrian began to feel better, she went back to the little one, who lay white and indifferent, fading through twilight into the darkness of death, and only now and then lifting her little hand to her dry lips.

Poor, sweet, fading bud of human life ; how closely it had grown into her heart, how impossible it seemed to bear to lose it. With streaming eyes she pressed her brow against her clasped hands as they rested upon the head-board of the little bed, and prayed with passionate fervour that God would spare this child and save its life. And not once only, but again and again ; but at last, when the half-glazed eye of the dying child no longer met her own,

her hands dropped into her lap, and her thoughts reverted to her husband, to the Town-Council, to the fate of the town, and to the words: "Save Leyden, and Holland is saved; Leyden lost, and all is lost!"

The woeful day faded into twilight, and the twilight sank into night. Truitje brought the lamp, and at last she heard Peter's footfall on the stairs. It must be he—and yet it could not be he, for he never dragged himself up the steps so heavily. The door of the study opened—yes, it was himself.

What could have happened, what had been decided by the citizens? With an anxious qualm she bade Truitje stay with the little girl, and she went to her husband.

Peter was sitting in front of his writing-table in his Burgomaster's dress, and with his hat on. His face was hidden in his folded arms, the two-branched candlestick stood lighted on the table. He saw nothing, heard nothing; and when she presently called him by his name he started violently, stood bolt upright, and flung his hat angrily on to the table. His hair was in disorder, his gaze unsteady, and in the dull flickering light of the candles his face was as gray as that of a corpse.

"What do you want?" he asked shortly, in a hoarse voice; but for some moments she could not answer—her tongue seemed paralysed with terror. At last she spoke.

"What has happened?" she said, and her voice betrayed her anguish.

"The beginning of the end," he said gloomily.

"They have out-voted you!" cried the young woman. "Baersdorp and the rest of the cowards want to treat?"

He drew himself up.

"Beware of what you say," he cried, in loud and threatening tones. "A man who holds out till his

children die, and corpses bar the way to his own house-door, who is responsible for a thousand deaths, who for weeks has been loaded with curses, and who for more than four months has hoped for succour, who, look where he will, sees nothing but unutterable and constantly increasing wretchedness and then feels that he can no longer thrust back the saving hand held out even by the foe——”

“He is a coward, a traitor, and breaks the solemn oath he has sworn !”

“Maria !” thundered Peter, going close up to her with a threatening glare.

She stood still, drawn up to her full height, and pointing her finger at him, as she went on with keen asperity, though her voice trembled :

“You—you voted with Baersdorp ! You, Peter van der Werff, you ! You have done this, the Prince’s friend, the guardian and providence of this brave town ; you, the man to whom the citizens pledged their word—the son of the martyr, the champion of freedom !”

“Say no more !” he interrupted, quivering with shame and rage. “Do you know what it is to bear the burden of this woe that cries to Heaven, in the sight of God and man ?”

“I do, I do, and again I say, I do. It is to bind your heart to the rack and wheel in order to save Holland and her freedom ! That is what it is ! Great God ! great God ! You are lost indeed ; you are making terms with Valdez !”

“And if I were ?” said the Burgomaster with a haughty wave of his hand as if to dismiss the question.

Maria fixed her eyes on his, and exclaimed with clear decision :

“Then it would be my turn to say, Go to Delft, go to Delft ; we want other men here.”

Van der Werff turned paler and looked down at the floor, while she stood facing him with a frank and fearless gaze. The light fell full on her glowing countenance, and as he raised his eyes once more to hers he felt that the woman who stood before him was that same Maria, who, as his bride, had sworn to share suffering and danger with him, and stand steadfast to the end in the struggle for freedom; he felt that his "child" Maria had grown up to his own level, ay, and beyond it; he recognised for the first time in the high-souled woman before him his ally in the fight, a worthy helpmate in trouble and in danger. An overpowering yearning, an eager aspiration such as he had never before felt, surged and seethed within him, and drew him to her, and found utterance in words.

"Maria!" he cried, "Maria, my wife, my guardian angel! We have indeed written to Valdez, but it is yet time; nothing as yet binds me, and with you, with you by my side, I can stand firm to the end." And in the middle of this day of anguish her heart overflowed with the flood of this new, unhoped-for, and unutterable joy. As she flung herself on his breast, she exclaimed: "And I with you—one with you! for ever, through this struggle, and in love beyond the grave!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PETER felt like a man under a charm. Courage and enthusiasm once more filled his soul, for they overflowed in an unfailling stream from the brave and confident spirit of his wife.

Under the pressure of the fearful responsibility he bore and the urgency of his fellow-citizens, he had agreed in the Council to write to Valdez and crave a safe-conduct for an envoy to be sent to the States-General and the Prince of Orange, to beg them to release the perishing city from its oath. Valdez spared no effort to incite the Burgomaster to farther negotiations, but Van der Werff stood firm, and the demand for release from the sacred duty of resistance never left the town. Both the Van der Does, the Town-Clerk, the Jonker van Warmond, and other staunch men, who, at the great general meeting had opposed all negotiations with the enemy, now ranged themselves on his side against their fellow-officials and the Town-Council, who, with the exception of seven only of their number, perseveringly and violently insisted on the discussion of terms.

Adrian soon got better, but the Doctor's predictions were terribly fulfilled ; for hunger and pestilence vied with each other in their hideous fury, and destroyed nearly half the inhabitants of the thriving town. And yet, deep as the

gloom was, and dark as was the horizon, in the midst of all this cruel misery, there were moments when a bright ray of sunshine fell on these suffering souls, and Hope unfurled her green standard. On the morning of the eleventh of September the townsfolk of Leyden rose from their beds more radiantly joyful than a bride roused on her wedding-day by the songs of her maiden companions, for in the distance the loud and persistent thunder of cannon could be heard, and the sky was dyed with crimson ; to the south-west of the town there must be villages in flames, and each house, each granary, that sank into ashes, burying the hopes of honest men, was a beacon of promise to the despairing Leydeners.

The Gueux were approaching !

There, out there, where the cannon thundered and the horizon glowed, was the Land-scheiding, the dyke, which for centuries had stoutly protected the plain of Leyden against the incursions of the waves, and which now stopped the advance of the fleet that was to bring them life.

"Fall, sheltering wall ! Rise, storms, and thou sea, engulf thy prey ! Destroy the peasant's wealth, ruin our fields and pastures, but drown the foe or drive him hence !"

Thus sang Janus Dousa, thus cried Peter's soul, thus prayed Maria, and with her thousands of men and women.

But the blaze in the distance died away, the firing was silent. A second day went by, a third, a fourth ; no messenger came, no ship of the Gueux was to be seen, and the lake lay motionless ; while another awful power grew and stalked through the city with secret, stealthy, and omnipotent force—Death, with its gaunt helpmates Despair and Famine. Silently and at night the dead were carried to their graves, that the survivors might share their slender ration undiminished. From house to house the Angel of

Death winged his way, and laid his hand at last on little Elizabeth, kissing her closed eyes as she slept in the noiseless night.

The faint-hearted, and those who sided with the Spaniards, assembled in mobs, one of which even made its way into the council-room, clamouring for bread. But there was not a crumb left in the stores, the authorities had nothing left to give but a morsel of cow or horse flesh, or hides—soaked and salted hides.

On one of these days of dire extremity, Van der Werff was going down the Breede Straat; he paid no heed to the fact that a crowd of desperate men and women were following him with threats and abuse, but as he turned a corner to go to Van Hout's house, he suddenly found himself surrounded. A pale woman, with a child in her arms at its last gasp, flung herself before him, holding the dying infant up to him, and crying in a hollow, feeble voice:

"Is it not enough, is it not enough? Look here, see this—it is the third! It is enough, enough!"

"Enough, enough! Bread, bread—give us bread!" thundered and growled all round him, and stones and missiles were lifted to throw, while a carpenter whom he knew, and who had always stood by the good cause, stepped close up to him, and said deliberately, in a deep voice: "We can bear it no longer. We have patiently endured famine and suffering to defy the Spaniards and to defend our Bible, but to fight with certain death is sheer madness."

Peter stood still, shocked and silent, and looked at the mother, the child, the stalwart working man, and the shrieking, threatening wretches. The common woe which was crushing them and so many starving creatures burdened his soul with tenfold weight. Anguish unutterable

clutched his heart, and he longed to open his arms and embrace them all as fellow-sufferers, and brethren in a future and nobler existence. He looked from one to another deeply moved; then pressing his hands to his breast he thus addressed the crowd that thronged round him :

“Here I stand. I have sworn to remain faithful, and you swore it with me. I will never break my oath, but I can die ! If my death can do you any good, here I am ! Bread I have none, but here is my body—take it ; kill me, and tear me in pieces. Here I stand, and I will never break my oath.”

The carpenter's head fell on his breast. “Come, good folks,” he said ; “God's will be done. We have sworn.”

The Burgomaster passed on calmly to his friend's house. Dame van Hout had watched the whole scene from a window, and that same day she related it to Maria, and her eyes sparkled with enthusiasm as she added :

“I never saw a man so supremely great as he was at that moment. It is well for us that he commands within these walls ; this deed will be remembered by our children and our children's children.”

They have, indeed, kept his memory green in faithful remembrance.

During the night which followed the day when the Burgomaster had held himself so bravely, a letter arrived from the Prince, full of cheerful and encouraging news. Their illustrious chief was well again, and straining every nerve to save his brave town of Leyden. The Gueux had pierced the Land-scheiding ; the ships were advancing ; help was approaching ; and the devoted men who brought the letter had, with their own eyes, seen the fleet that was bringing supplies and the champions of freedom, fired with

zeal and valour for the struggle. The two Van der Does were nominated in the same letter to represent the Prince in the place of Van Bronkhorst. Van der Werff no longer stood alone ; and when, next morning, " Father William's " letter was read to the populace, and the messenger's errand had become generally known, the spirits and confidence of the long-suffering townsfolk rose like withered grass under refreshing showers.

But there were still weary weeks of terror and misery to be gone through. In the last days of September they had to kill the cows, which till then had been spared for the benefit of the children and women in child-bed ; and then—what next ? Succour was at hand, for the sky was opened, and the air shook with the thunder of distant cannon ; but the east wind blew steadily, and held back the water which was let in upon the land ; and the ships which were trying to reach the town needed a high flood-tide.

Of all the messengers they sent forth not one returned ; nothing was certain but their hideous, cruel, and increasing misery.

At last Barbara had succumbed, and was complaining of prostration and loathing for every kind of food. Maria remembered the roast pigeon which had been so welcome to their little lost Liesje, and she went to the musician to ask him whether he could bear to sacrifice another of his pets to save her sister-in-law.

She was received by his mother, who was sitting languid and feeble in an easy-chair. She could still walk, it is true, but all this anxiety and extreme want had brought on a strange shaking palsy in her hands. To Maria's question she shook her head and replied : " Ask him yourself. He has had to keep the poor little creatures shut up, for if they had been seen, they would have been shot down long

since by the starving people. He still has three ; the rest have flown off with various letters, but have never come back. Thank God ! say I, for the scrap of food he still has by him is better in the pot than in their crops. Would you believe it ? A fortnight since he paid fifty glden out of his savings for half a sack of peas, and God only knows where he got them then. Ullrich, take Dame van der Werff up to speak to Wilhelm. I would spare you the stairs, but he is watching up there for the pigeons he has sent out, and will not come down even to meals ; and God knows they are not worth coming down to."

The day was clear and sunny. Wilhelm was standing on his balcony, and looking out over the green, well-watered plain that stretched before him to the south. Behind him sat the Captain's orphan son, Andreas, writing music ; but his attention was not very steady, for, whenever he had finished a line, he sat gazing into the air and watching, like his master, for the expected pigeons. He was not very much the worse for the dearth, for a certain portion of the pigeons' food had fallen to his share with his small allowance of meat.

Wilhelm was as much surprised as honoured by Maria's visit, and promised to grant her request ; but it was plain that he did not find it an easy matter to say " Yes." The young woman went out on to the balcony with him, and he showed her that to the south, where formerly nothing had been visible but miles of green, there was a line—a long, level margin—above which hovered a filmy mist. The noon-day sun seemed to saturate the pale vapour with light, and draw it upwards. It was the water that was pouring in through the cuts in the dykes ; and the long black patches which might be seen moving on its shore must be the Spanish troops and herds of cattle

which were being driven into the outermost forts, villages, and hamlets, by the encroaching tide. The Land-scheiding itself was out of sight, but the Gueux had already cut through that. If the fleet could only reach the Zoetermeer Lake, and from thence——

But Wilhelm suddenly broke off in his explanation, for Andreas sprang up, throwing down his stool and shouting :

"It is coming! the pigeon! By Roland, my former self, there it is!"

It was the first time that Wilhelm had ever heard the father's favourite cry from the lips of the son; something must have excited him strangely; and in fact he was not mistaken, for the speck which his sharp eyes had espied cutting through the air was no longer a speck but already an object of discernible form—a bird—a pigeon.

Wilhelm snatched up a banner that lay on the balcony, and waved it more joyfully than ever a victor waved his flag after winning a battle. There came the pigeon; it settled, slipped into the dovecot, and in another minute the musician appeared with a tiny letter in his hand.

"To the Burgomaster—quick!" cried Wilhelm. "Carry it at once to your husband, dear Dame, and finish what the pigeon has begun. God be praised! they are already at North Aa. This will save the poor folks from despair; and one thing more, you shall have a bird to cook; but take this corn too—barleymeal porridge is the very best remedy in Barbara's condition;—I have tried it."

In the evening, and after the organist had communicated the good news to his parents, he ordered that the blue pigeon with a white breast should be killed. "Make an end of it outside," he said; "I cannot bear to see it done."

Andreas soon came in with the dead pigeon; his lips

were red, and Wilhelm could guess the reason, but he could not scold the famishing boy, and only said :

“ Faugh ! you ferret ! ”

Next morning, quite early, another pigeon flew in. The letters that they had brought were read out from the window of the town-hall, and the courage of the Leydeners, now in the utmost extremity of misery, once more flickered into life, and helped them to endure the worst. One of the letters was to Van der Werff, the other to Janus Dousa ; they spoke of confidence and hope ; and the Prince—the faithful rock of their freedom, the friend and leader of the nation—the Prince was well and strong again, and had himself been to see the ships which were being sent to relieve the town. Salvation was so near—but the north-east wind would not change, and the waters did not rise.

On the Burcht and other elevated spots stood the citizens, soldiers, town-councillors and women in great numbers, all gazing into the distance. A thousand hands were uplifted in fervent prayer, and all eyes were fixed in feverish expectation and agonising longing on the southern horizon ; but the line of water did not advance, and the sun broke brightly through the mists of the autumn mornings as if in mockery, tempered the keen air, and sank to rest in the evening in a fiery glow and far-reaching shafts of golden light. A cloudless blue sky o’er-arched the town with pitiless calm, and decked itself at night with myriads of bright stars.

On the morning of the 29th, however, the mists seemed to pack more solidly together, the grass was dewless, a fog rose, the sharp air was tempered to a dull mildness, and the great clouds grew dense and gathered blackness. Then a light breeze rose, and rustled in the

leafless branches, and suddenly a gust of wind swept over the heads of the watching crowd. It was followed by a second and a third, and at last the gale whistled and roared, and a howling storm whirled through the town, sweeping the tiles from the roofs, bending the fruit-trees in the gardens and the young elms and lime-trees in the streets; tearing down the banners which the boys had stuck up on the walls, in defiance of the Spaniards; lashing the dull waters of the canals and the moat. And now—for the Lord forsaketh not his own—the weathercock veered, the blast came down from the north-west, and drove the spring-tide in the storm-tossed sea up the mouth of the Maas; none could see it, but the seamen shouted out the news, and it was caught up and passed on from one to another. The stream was forced violently up its channel and over its banks; rushing through the cuttings made in the dykes to admit it, and through the yawning sluice-gates, and bearing on its mighty shoulders the ships that bore relief.

Rage, rage, thou storm; beat down, thou lashing rain; rush on, ye floods; destroy the land, engulf the houses and farms! Thousands are waiting to welcome you on the walls and towers of Leyden. They see in you the avenging and saving hosts of the Lord, and rejoice and hail you with shouts.

For two successive days the Burgomaster—with Maria and Adrian, and the families of Van der Does and Van Hout—has remained, with brief intervals, among the townspeople, who are watching from the Burcht or the Cow Gate; and even Barbara, though hardly recovered, will not be kept at home, for hope has done more to revive her than the barleymeal porridge and the lean pigeon; she has dragged herself up to the musician's eyrie, for every one

must see the advancing waters, as the earth gives place to them—see the moisture trickle through the grass, collect in puddles, pools, lakes, till at last it is a broad level, beaten by the thrashing rain into bubbles that break into rings and vanish. Every one wants to see with his own eyes how the Spaniards hurry hither and thither, like sheep fleeing before a wolf. Every one must hear for himself the thunder of the Gueux' cannon, the rattle of their arquebuses and musketry; men and women alike, rejoice more in the storm which threatens to sweep them away, than in the softest zephyr; and the drenching rain that soaks them is more delightful than the sun-lit showers of spring.

Beyond the stronghold of Lammen, defended by some hundred Spanish soldiers, and the tower of Croonesteyn, a keen eye could now detect the ships of the Gueux. All Thursday and Friday Wilhelm had looked in vain for a pigeon, but on Saturday his best carrier came home. It bore a letter from Admiral Boisot, begging that the men-at-arms left in the town would make a sortie on the Friday, and throw themselves upon Lammen. The storm had carried the bird out of its track; it had arrived a day too late. However, on the Saturday evening Janus Dousa and Captain van der Laen prepared to move. All who could bear arms were called out early on Sunday morning. A hapless, pale, and diminished force gathered at their Commanders' call; but none would be missing, and all were prepared to yield up their lives for the rescue of the town, and of those dear to them.

The storm had moderated; the firing had ceased; the night was warm and dark. Not an eye was closed, and those who, for a few moments, were overcome by sleep were startled and alarmed by strange and mysterious noises. Wilhelm sat up on his balcony looking and listening

towards the south. Now a light gust of wind would whistle round the tall house, now a shout, a cry, a trumpet-call rang through the silent night ; and presently there was a crash and roar out by the Cow Gate, as though an earthquake had shaken the foundations of part of the town and hurled it to the ground. There was not a star in the sky, but in the neighbourhood of Lammen dancing lights moved in regular rows across the black darkness. It was an ominous and terrible night.

At dawn it was seen that a part of the town-wall by the Cow Gate had fallen in, and a cry of joy went up to Heaven at the sight of the breach, which was now no longer a source of danger, while the joyful news flew through the streets and alleys. Men and women, old men and children, sick and sound, came out of the houses, crowding down to the Cow Gate ; now the fleet of the Gueux was to be seen rapidly coming nearer, and the town-carpenter, Thomassohn, with some others, was tearing up the piles with which the Spaniards had barred the Vliet, till at last the first ship, and then a second and a third, was close under the walls. The wild-looking hairy sailors—men with deeply-scarred, fierce, sun-burnt faces, which for years had felt no touch of any salt water but the sea spray—were laughing to the citizens and crying and sobbing like children ; while they threw them up loaves and good things long unknown to them, which the poor creatures on the wall ate and ate, and could not even find a word of thanks. And then the chiefs arrived and met ; Admiral Boisot fell into the arms of Van der Does and the Burgomaster, and Van Duykenburg into those of his mother, old Barbara, and many a Leydener hugged the liberators he had never set eyes on till this hour. Many, many a tear was shed, and thousands of hearts overflowed, and the Sunday bells rang out louder

and clearer than was their wont, bidding the rescuer and the rescued alike to church and prayer. The wide vault of the sanctuary was too narrow for the worshippers, and when the preacher, Corneliussohn—filling the place of the worthy Verstroot, who had fallen ill himself while tending so many sufferers—exhorted the devout to thanksgiving, his words had long been anticipated, for at the very first sounds of the organ the thousands who crowded the church in every part had been fired to offer up, as with one voice, thanks—thanks, and again fervent thanks !

Pater Damianus, too, returned thanks to God in the little chapel of the Carmelite Sisters, and with him Nicolas van Wibisma and many another Catholic, to whom freedom and his fatherland were dear,

After church, Adrian, with a piece of bread in one hand and his shoes in the other, waded at the head of his school-fellows across the higher meadows, which were all under water, as far as Leyderdorp, to see the deserted Spanish camp. There stood the handsome tent of the Commander-in-chief; over the bedstead hung a map of the Rhineland, which had been drawn by Beeldsnyder, a Dutchman, for the destruction of his own countrymen. The boys stood gazing at it, and a Gueux, who had once sat at a desk, and who now looked like a sea-bear, went up to them.

"See here, lads," he said, "here is the Land-scheiding. We cut through that first, but that was only half our task. We were checked at the Greenway, and here at the third dyke—the Voorweg they call it—we found too hard a nut to crack; we could not get through any way. So back we had to go again, a long round by Zeegwaert and through the canal here, where we had a hard tussle, to North Aa. The Zoetermeer Lake was now behind us, but

the water was too shallow, and we could get no farther. Have you see the great "Ark of Delft"? It is a huge vessel, and is not moved by oars but by wheels which turn and push it on through the water; you will like to see it. At last the Lord sent the storm and the spring-tide, and the ships had water enough to float them. At the Kirkway we again had hot work, but we got to Lammen the day before yesterday. Many a brave man had already fallen on both sides, but when we got to Lammen, we all thought we were to fight it out in good earnest. Early this morning we meant to storm the fort, but when day dawned all was awfully still in the nest, and there was an uncanny sultriness in the air. Then we thought to ourselves, 'It is all over with Leyden; hunger has been too much for them!' But nothing of the kind! You are made of sterner stuff; and a boy came wading out to the ship—about as big as one of you—and said that in the night he had seen a long train of lights come out of the fort and march away. At first we would not believe him, but the boy was right. The crabs had found the water too hot for them, and the lights the youngster had seen were the slow matches of the Spaniards. Look, children, there is Lammen——" Adrian and his companions had gone quite close up to the map, and had interrupted the seaman's story with a loud laugh.

"What have you found there, curly-pate?" asked the Gueux.

"Look here, look here, the great Valdez has immortalised himself; and here is his name too! Our headmaster would make him wear a dunce's cap, for he writes *Castelli parvi*! 'Vale civitas, valet *Castelli parvi*; relictis estis propter aquam et non per vim inimicorum.' Oh, what an ass! *Castelli parvi*!"

"And what does all that mean?" asked the sailor.

"Farewell, Leyden, farewell, ye little *Castelli* ! you are abandoned because of the waters and not because of the strength of the enemy. '*Parvi Castelli* !' I must tell mother of that."

On Monday William of Orange arrived at Leyden and took up his quarters in the Baron of Montfoort's house. The people hailed their "Father William" with great rejoicing; and the indefatigable champion of the freedom of the Netherlands, in the midst of the satisfaction and triumph that surrounded him, busied himself for the further prosperity of the town. At a later period he rewarded the staunch endurance of its inhabitants with a truly glorious monument of their victory—the University of Leyden. It served to arouse and cherish in the busy town, and throughout the land which had so long lain bleeding under the horrors of war, that lofty spirit whose struggles and labours are their own reward, and which sets eternal blessings far above temporal ones. That tree of which the seed was sown at the moment of escape from utter misery, and in the very midst of warfare and suffering, has borne splendid fruits for mankind, and bears them still, and, please God ! will flourish for many a century yet.

On the 26th of July 1581, seven years after the relief of Leyden, Holland and Zealand, whose political independence had already been established for six years, declared at the Hague their formal separation from Spain. William of Orange had hitherto ruled as *Stadhouder*, or Regent, under King Philip, and had even carried on the war against him in his own name. Nay, the charter of foundation of the University, a document which, in spite of the grave purpose which dictated it, may be designated as an unsurpassed masterpiece of subtle political irony—was put into the

mouth of King Philip by his viceroy ; and it is amusing to read in this legal deed that the gloomy bigot in the Escorial has, after mature deliberation, agreed with his dear and faithful cousin, William of Orange, to found a free school and university on grounds which it is quite certain the King must have held in the greatest abhorrence.

On the 24th of July this mockery had been quashed, and Philip formally deposed. The Prince no longer wielded the government in the name of the King, but in that of the States-General.

Three days later the event was celebrated by a splendid banquet in Van der Werff's house.

The windows of the dining-room stood open, and the fresh air of the summer night fanned the heated brows of the guests who had met round the Burgomaster's table. These were all his best and most intimate friends : Janus Dousa ; Van Hout ; the learned Doctor Grotius of Delft, who, to Maria's great joy, had been invited to Leyden as a professor, and who had this year been chosen Rector, or Warden, of the new University ; our learned acquaintance, the innkeeper Aquanus ; Doctor Bontius, now professor of medicine at the college ; and others. The musician Wilhelm was present too, but not alone ; for with him was his handsome and charming wife, Anna d'Avila, whom he had lately brought home from Italy. He had now for some years borne the name of Van Duivenbode—"pigeon messenger," the State having granted him this well-earned surname and a coat of arms—on a field argent, three pigeons azure, and two keys crossed.

With the full consent of the Prince, the bequests of old Mistress van Hoogstraten to her relations and servants had been recognised, and Wilhelm and his wife were now living in a handsome new house—with a dovecot attached—where

Maria took part in many a madrigal, although the four children she had brought her husband left her now but little time. The musician had plenty to tell Adrian of Rome and of his sister-in-law, Henrika ; and Adrian was now a fine young man, who had studied at the University, and was ere long to be made a member of the Town-Council. Belotti had followed Henrika to Italy after the death of her father, who had consented to see and bless Anna once more, and there she lived as Superior of a Secular Order who cultivated music with special zeal.

Barbara was not among the guests, for she found enough to occupy her in the kitchen. Her wide cap frills were goffered now with an almost coquettish elaboration, and the confident satisfaction with which she ruled Truitje and the other two serving maids amply proved that all went well in Peter's household and business.

And it was really worth while to take some extra trouble for the guests they had upstairs. The Jonker van Warmond was among them, and a place of honour was kept for him between Doctor Grotius and Janus Dousa, the chief curator of the University ; for he had risen to be a great personage and a powerful statesman, who had had great difficulty in making time to come from the Hague with his young colleague, Nicolas van Wisbisma, to take part in the festivity. But he was as lively and eager as ever, as he pledged Master Aquanus, exclaiming :

"To the memory of old times and our friend Georg von Dornburg !"

"With all my heart," replied the innkeeper. "It is a long time since we heard any tidings of his daring deeds and travels."

"Very naturally. The fermenting liquor has settled and cleared itself. Dornburg is in the English service again, and a month ago I met him in London, a British naval officer.

His squadron is now on the way to Venice. But he still thinks of all here with affection, and bade me greet you. You would hardly recognise our favourite of other days in the respected and imperious commander, at once so calm and so jovial. How often would his soaring genius bear him high above our heads, and how sad it was to see him gloomily dreaming over his secret sorrows !”

“I saw the Jonker formerly in Delft,” said Grotius. “Such soaring spirits are apt to fly too high, and then to have a fall ; but if they can only harness themselves to the car of work and duty, they have a force that may move heavy burdens and conquer the greatest difficulties with happy ease.”

Meanwhile Adrian, at a sign from his father, had risen to his feet and filled the glasses of the company with the best wine he had, The “Hoch” which the Burgomaster gave out was in honour of the Prince, and Janus Dousa supplemented it with one for the independence and freedom of their native land. Van Hout filled a glass to the memory of their days of suffering and of the wonderful rescue of the town. Every one responded vehemently to this, and when their cheers had died away, Aquanus said :

“Who does not thankfully remember that Sunday, October the 3d ! But when I look back on the misery that preceded it my very heart stands still to this day.”

Peter took his wife’s hand and pressed it tenderly, as he said to her in a low voice :

“And yet it was then, on the bitterest day of my life, that I found my dearest blessing.”

“So did I !” she replied, with a grateful look into his honest eyes.

THE END.



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